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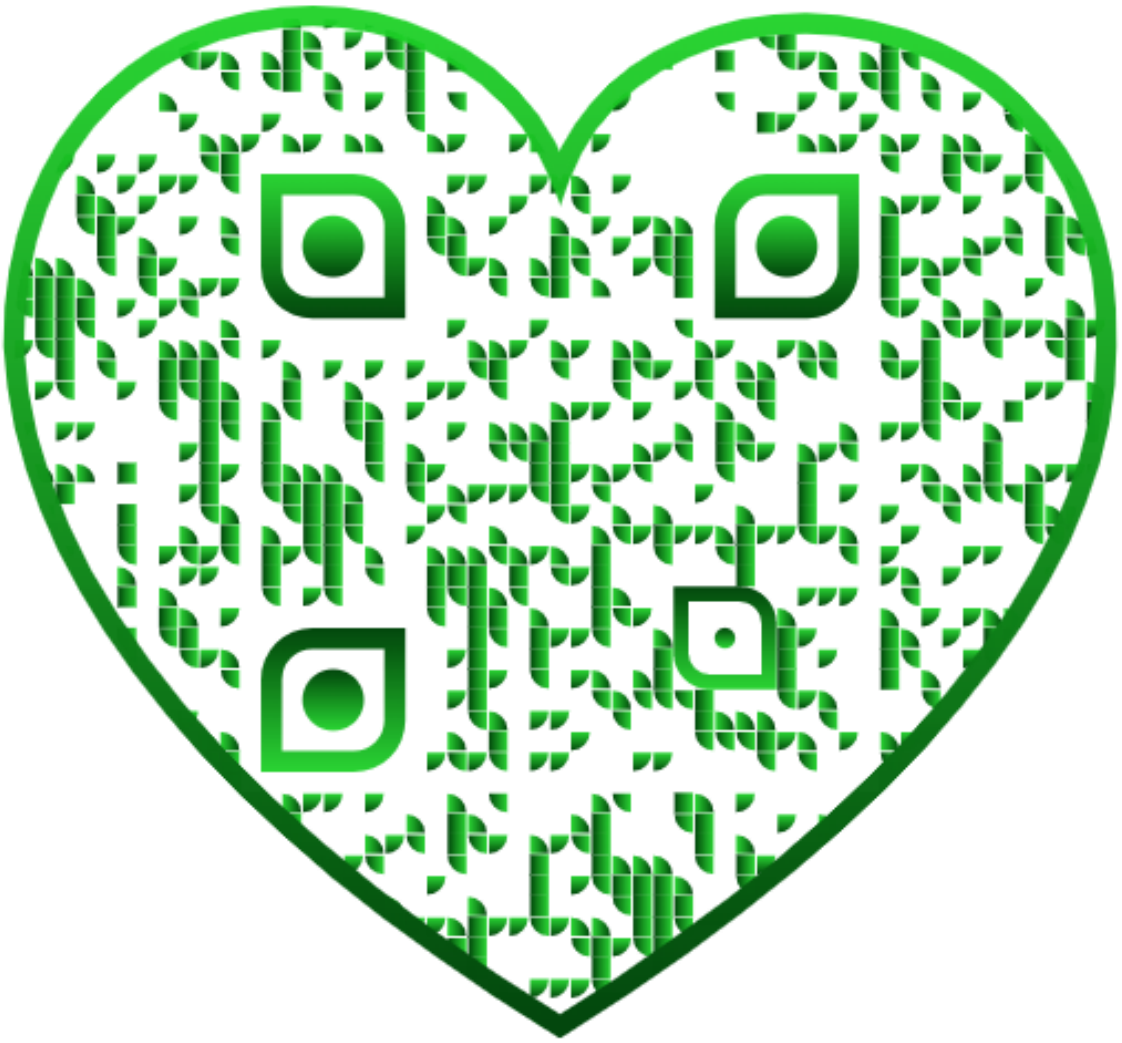

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In with the old, In with the new...

It's recently been that time of the year when the guitar industry decamps to California to show everybody its new wares. Our cover story of the NAMM show highlights the fact that makers are listening to us customers more than ever before. Sometimes that means a major overhaul of their products and some serious innovation; sometimes it means leaving things well alone, apart from introducing a new finish or two. We hope that the feature gives you that 'Christmas edition of *The Radio Times*' feeling of excited anticipation of the new gear that's coming your way sometime soon(ish).

If you're more interested in gear you can try and buy right now, feel free to head to our reviews section where good things from the likes of Marshall, Reverend, D'Angelico and Tanglewood await.

Our vintage expert Sid Bishop focuses his attention on amps this issue while, as always, there's a corkin' *Private Collection* to savour. All this, plus interviews with greats such as Nathan East and more, await you in the following pages. There's always plenty of digital *G&B* larks to be had by visiting us at www.guitar-bass.net, but for now, we hope you enjoy the issue – and we wish you the best of luck with all your guitar-related endeavours...

John

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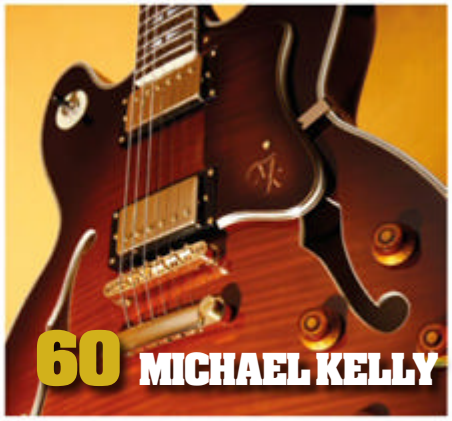

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A finely-machined short -scale semi-acoustic bass with righteous growl, punch and clarity, plus bags of character

Kemper Profiling Amp 81
As the first modelling amp to offer profiles for bass players this is a true low-end innovation

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Reverberations

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STAR LETTER

What to do with a guitar-phobic dog? Answers needed!

FOR FIDO'S SAKE!

I was wondering if you could help me with my current guitar-playing dilemma. We bought the kids a dog for Christmas, a Yorkshire terrier called Roscoe (name not of my choosing), and in pretty much every way he's been a welcome addition to the family. BUT... this dog is really against me playing my guitar, and by that I mean he goes absolutely ape if I so much as put a pick to a string. No matter what time of the day or night I play, how quietly I play, or what I play, the dog starts barking with all its might and won't stop until I do. This happens even when we're on different floors at opposite ends of the house. At first it was quite funny, but now it's starting to get on my nerves. Given that I can't move to a bigger house, or spend a fortune soundproofing it, I'm not sure what to do. I don't want to get rid of the dog (it'd cause plenty of tears), but I don't want to give up the guitar – and I'm not going to leave the house every time I want to gently strum some chords. Any ideas?

Jerry Wilson *via email*

G&B **Blimey! That is a right pickle you're in, Jerry. We've encountered plenty of domestic animals that haven't appreciated loud guitar playing in our time, but none so bad as to bark the house down as soon as you start playing. Can anyone out there help? Is there a dog training technique – or dog-friendly setlist – worth Jerry trying? Alternatively, does anyone know of some animal-friendly earplugs?**

Rosetti

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FOR SAM LI...

It was with such pride that I read your star letter 'Sam Li Tribute' in your December 2014 issue. Sam was my stepfather who brought me up from the age of two, and this year being the 10th anniversary of his passing, I decided to write his biography. It was heartwarming to hear Ken Willis talk of taking guitars up to Sam's workshop with the smell of glue and soldering. As a child growing up it was a real treat to go up to his workshop in Gerrard Street on a Saturday. I loved to watch him work; I was fascinated to see how he would plane a chunk of wood into the smoothest surface, and to watch him trim the frets and carve slots in the wood to glue them into. There was always something being clamped, and the sound of tuning a guitar and then hearing a recognisable melody meant the job was done. But most of all I loved the stickers on the guitar cases... Yes, Pink Floyd, Status Quo, Nazareth, Wishbone Ash, and many more. Two months before Sam passed away we were talking and he said to me he wanted to live forever. I couldn't do anything about that and so on the 10th anniversary of his passing I decided to write his story so that his memory will live on. Recently I have been in contact with Dave Hill, Francis Rossi and Steve Howe, who kindly gave me an insight into the guitar world from the '60s up to the '80s and the work Sam did for them. I am currently in correspondence with other artists who have also very kindly agreed to talk with me about their memories of Sam. I am hoping to talk to as many as possible to gain a complete picture of the music world that Sam was a part of and how his work played a part in their music careers. I have heard that artists such as Peter Green, David Gilmour, Jeff Beck, Andy Summers, Mark Knopfler and many more all took their prized Stratocasters and Telecasters to Sam for repair. I'm very interested to find out how many custom-built guitars Sam produced, and would be most happy to hear from anyone who has any information about the work he did and what it meant to them.

Fiona Beattie *via email*

G&B **Many thanks for taking the time to write in, Fiona, and we're glad to play a small part in ensuring that a well-loved figure in UK guitar history is still remembered. If anyone has any stories or info they'd like to send to Fiona, please send them to through to *Guitar & Bass* via the usual methods and we'll pass them on.**

BRIT-BRIT...HOORAY!

It was great to read your British Amp Invasion cover story in the February issue. I've always been a fan of British amps, and having started off with a Dominator when I was a youngster back in the '50s, have managed to purchase nearly all the brands mentioned. I've no interested in being all jingoistic about anything – and I don't think that American amps are bad – but we should be rightly proud that a small nation like ours has created so much. Just want to raise a glass to all the amp makers mentioned in the article. Many thanks for providing all music fanatics with the means to enjoy rock'n'roll and the electric guitar; I don't want to imagine what my life would have been without it. And thanks to yourselves for recognising the achievements of these fine inventors. Long may it continue...

Bernard Roundshaw *via email*

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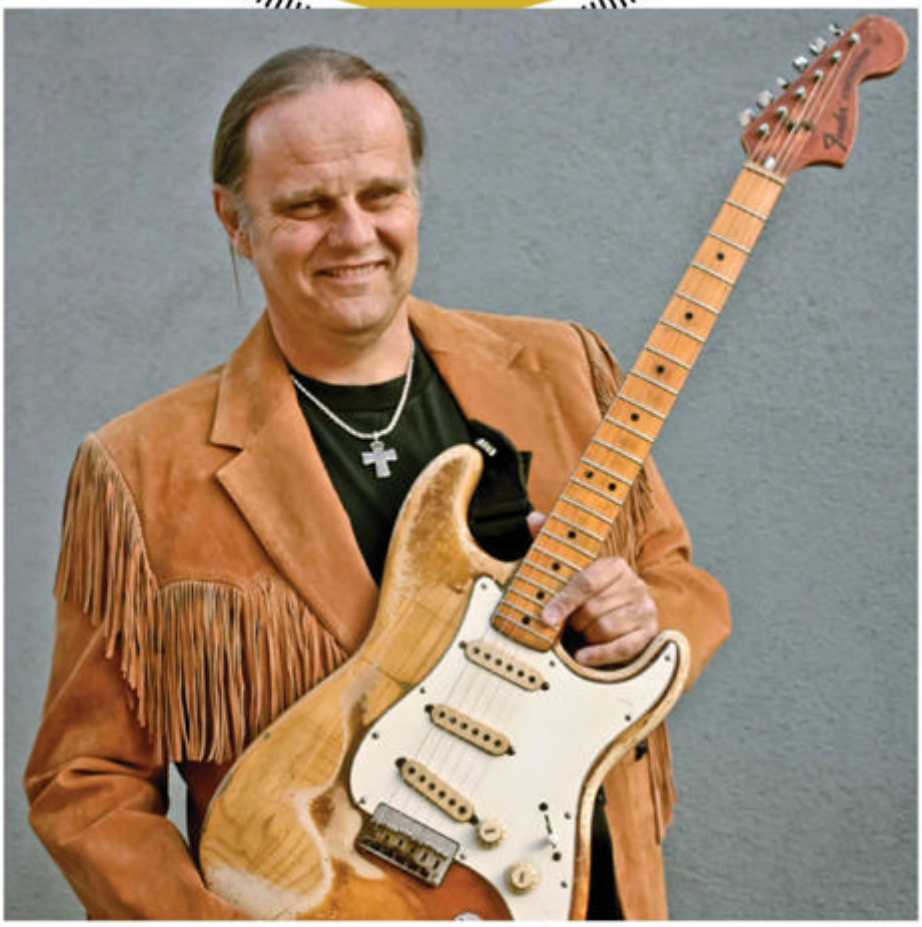
Woke up this mornin'... NEWS



Trout Back On Tour

Good news for blues lovers as the guitarist with the mighty skills overcomes his illness and heads out on a thank-you tour

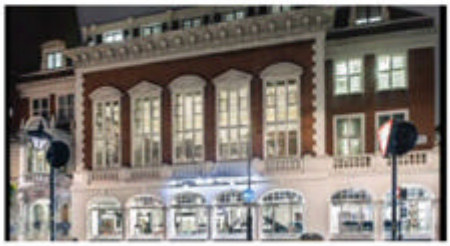
Following a life-saving liver transplant, less than nine months ago, ultimate blues rock road warrior Walter Trout has booked himself in for a comeback dubbed the *I'm Back* tour. It's nothing short of a miraculous return. Back in early 2014 Walter's wife Marie launched an online appeal to raise $125,000 in a bid to raise money for his operation, and such was the love out there for Walter that the target was raised in only four days. His life had been hanging by a thread, and without his fans rallying around, we certainly would have lost him.

Trout, it seems, is a man reborn and to read his words of thanks is life-affirming. 'In the last year I came face to face with death more than once,' he states. 'My wife moved me to Nebraska to improve my chances of getting a life-saving liver transplant, and after a long wait, I got my new liver on May 26th, 2014. Since then I have been filled with immense gratitude. Gratitude for the fans who supported me via fundraisers, cards, messages, thoughts and prayers, for the donor and his or her family, for medical science, for my family, and for life itself. Everything matters more to me now. I feel like a new man. I have strength and energy. In some ways I feel like I am in my 20s again! I am able to play better than I have in years. I cannot wait to get back out on the road again and do what I love to do for my fans.'

British fans will get their first glimpse of Walter on stage at the Albert Hall London on June 15 as part of the Leadbelly Fest alongside the likes of Van Morrison, Eric Burdon and Jools Holland. Then, in October, a full US and European tour begins. He'll start at the Coach House, San Juan Capistrano, California, a venue that has a special resonance for him and he'll reach these shores on 17 November, playing six shows across the country. We're sure there will be an emotional welcome at every gig. See www.waltertrout.com for tour dates.

Red Special Ukulele

Designed by Brian May himself in conjunction with House Music, the new BM signature ukulele is a dead ringer for the famed Red Special, albeit it in nylon four-string miniature form. The uke comes in eye-catching antique cherry and build includes sapele back and sides and a spruce top (we're assuming no fireplaces were involved). To ensure your inspired ukulele version of *Bohemian Rhapsody* will be heard by the gathered masses there's an undersaddle piezo pickup and fully featured Fishman KULA onboard preamp. The RRP is £225 and the ukes can be perused at www.brianmay guitars.co.uk.



YAMAHA SUPERSTORE

Yamaha London reopened its doors in Wardour Street in the heart of Soho at the end of January after an extensive refit that has adapted its sumptuous old Georgian environs into a state-of-the-art futuristic musical instrument store. Three floors boast the very latest in innovation and technology alongside good old-fashioned wood and wire. You won't not find a greater spread of Yamaha gear anywhere, and there's an unbeatable Line 6 section now too; any trip to the capital would be definitely be enhanced by a visit. See www.yamahamusiclondon.com.

North East Guitar Show

On Sunday 22 March the North East Guitar Show welcomes all at Rainton Meadows Arena in Houghton-le-Spring – just off the A1 (m), junction 62 – and a feast of guitar will be laid bare. More stands than ever are expected, while bargains and special show deals are guaranteed. You can bring your own guitars and amps for free appraisals, too. There'll be demos and live bands all day with the likes of blues/rock sensations the Mitch Laddie Band and folk duo the Huers already booked. It's £6 on the door, parking is free, catering is top notch, and there's the all-important bar. See more at www.guitarshows.co.uk.

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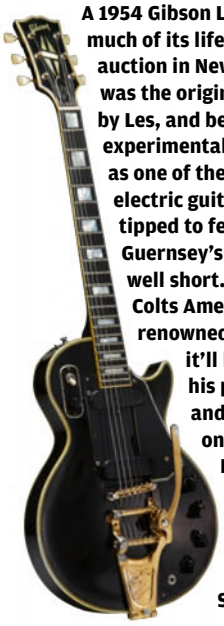
PAUL BRETT'S VINTAGE EXHIBITION

Paul Brett's extensive guitar collection is so large it's featured in our *Private Collection* feature not once but twice, and we're assured there's still more. Many of his guitars will be put up for sale at Tennants Auctioneers Exhibition Centre in Leyburn, North Yorkshire, but first they will be on exhibition from 1 April until the end of May. Most of Paul's fantastic collection are acoustics but he has a fine selection of early electrics too, and instruments dating from the mid-1700s to the present day will be on display. There will also be an opening day charity guitar concert on the evening of 1 April featuring the likes of John Etheridge and Gordon Giltrap; tickets are just £15. The auction itself will take place on 20 June. See www.tennants.co.uk.

Les Paul's 'Black Beauty' fetches $335K



A 1954 Gibson Les Paul Custom owned for much of its life by Les Paul himself has sold at auction in New York for $335,500. The guitar was the original 'Black Beauty', as christened by Les, and became a testbed for many of his experimental modifications. Widely seen as one of the forefathers of the modern electric guitar, this prototype had been tipped to fetch anything up to $2 million at Guernsey's auction, but on the night it fell well short. The new owner is Indianapolis Colts American football team owner and renowned guitar collector, Jim Irsay; it'll look good between his pristine '59 'burst and a Rickenbacker 325 once owned by John Lennon. Chet Atkins' 'Dark Eyes' Gretsch was also up for grabs, but the guitar failed to reach its reserve. See www.guernseys.com

MUSIKMESSE 2015

This year's Musik Messe instrument expo in Frankfurt is as much a public show as it is a trade show with two of its four days open to all comers. It houses by far the biggest selection of new guitar gear that can be seen anywhere in Europe, and much of the kit that was paraded at this year's NAMM show will be on hand. Public days are 17-18 April (9am-6pm) and day tickets cost 20 euros online or 30 euros at the box office. Tickets also permit free use of all Frankfurt public transport. Be warned, hotel rooms can be pricey. See http://musik.messefrankfurt.com.

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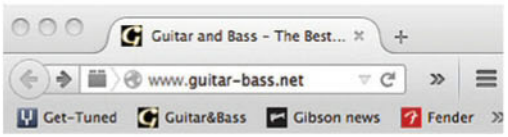

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Album reviews

Steve Hackett

WOLFLIGHT

Century Media

Getting up close and personal with some camera-loving wolves on the cover, Hackett's always been a musician with a burning sense of adventure, and that's still the case with his new solo album, employing orchestral and Middle

Eastern textures to engrossing effect. At the heart of it all, as always, is Hackett's lyrical playing, testing the boundaries of the acoustic and electric guitar as only he can.

Stephen Dale Petit

LIVE AT HIGH VOLTAGE

333

The original vinyl-only release of this set quickly achieved cult status, and SDP has finally allowed a digital release of the record. What you get is Stephen Dale Petit and the band (including Pretty Things guitarist Dick Taylor on bass) ripping into

such classics as *Summertime Blues*, *Juke* and *Shakin' All Over* with such ferocity you'll think they've turned up in your living room. A true tour de force.

Eliana Cargnelutti, Sadie Johnson, Heather Crosse

GIRLS WITH GUITARS

Ruf

Blues rock imprint Ruf launched its first Girls With Guitars album in 2011 featuring the trio of Dani Wilde, Samantha Fish and Victoria Smith. It was a smash that launched solo careers, and the current

crop of Sadie Johnson and Eliana Cargnelutti on guitars and Heather Crosse on bass are just as adept. A snappy, soulful feast of covers and originals ensures the trick is repeated.

Robin Trower

SOMETHING'S ABOUT TO CHANGE

Manhaton/V2

When one of the finest – but least self-aggrandising – electric players around says that he can't remember ever being so happy with a finished album before, then you know it's a record worthy of your attention. Robin Trower has every right to be

happy with this one: from start to finish, *Something's About To Change* is a vital and menacing (in the right way) record that proves yet again his dynamic guitar chops.

Michael Schenker's Temple Of Rock

SPIRIT ON A MISSION

Inakustik

Ever since his Scorpions days, Michael Schenker has always been a guitarist who's inspired true devotion among fans. His new studio album, complete with kick-ass band in tow, is a high-octane fret-fest that grabs you by the lapels and

doesn't let go. Schenker's ability remains undiminished; indeed, after the theft of computers containing final mixes, the forced re-recording only honed his approach.

Otis Taylor

HEY JOE OPUS RED MEAT

Inakustik

Taylor calls his rootsy, hypnotic brew 'trance blues' and his latest project, which revolves around life-changing decisions made by the song's various characters, is deeply philosophical. *Hey Joe* is a staple of Taylor's live set and there are two versions

on here; both are intense and haunting and set the mood for the whole album. Guitarists Langhorne Slim, Warren Hayes and Daniel Sproul help Otis weave his dark, soulful spell.

Wes Montgomery

IN THE BEGINNING

Resonance

Releases such as these often focus heavily on the 'rare' and 'never-before-released' nature of the material. That's all well and grand for all you music historians out there, but – unlike plenty of these releases – the music on *In The Beginning*

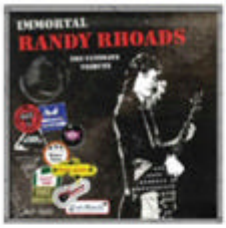
can be savoured without a care for dates, times, and so on. Montgomery's superlative jazz stylings shine through, regardless of the fidelity of the tapes.

Immortal Randy Rhoads

THE ULTIMATE TRIBUTE

UDR Music

The legendary hard rock guitarist is given his due here as a whole host of stellar artists line up to celebrate his songwriting and playing legacy. Rage Against The Machine's Tom Morello girds his loins and gives it his all on *Crazy Train*, Doug



Aldrich does a great job on *Believer*, while George Lynch gets to grips with *I Don't Know*. A worthy tribute to Rhoads – a man who should never be forgotten.

Kevin Eubanks & Stanley Jordan

DUETS

Mack Avenue

Jazz guitar men Eubanks and Jordan first met three decades ago; this is the first time the two have played together, yet they blend so naturally you'd be forgiven for thinking they'd been at it from that first introduction. It's a gentle work where fingers

dance on strings with incredible grace and subtlety. The virtuosity is evident, yet it never obstructs the brilliant exploratory dovetailing of two ingenious talents digging deep.

SNAP JUDGEMENTS

Black Rainbows

HAWKDOPE

Heavy Psych Sounds

Prime fuzzed-up space rock of a psychedelic bent from an Italian trio who channel Hawkwind, Sabbath and the MC5 with punky conviction and intrepid fretwork

Krissy Matthews

SCENES FROM A MOVING WINDOW

Promise

Ex-Cream lyricist Pete Brown lends his muse to a spirited guitar slinger with a predilection for swaggering, adrenalin-fuelled blues rock

Krossborder

KOMPILATION VOL 2

Krossborder Rekords

Another 16 choice cuts culled from Brit blues scenesters such as the Bare Bones Boogie Band, Jack Hutchinson, and the Mighty Boss Cats. Pure homegrown

Ian Siegal

ONE NIGHT IN AMSTERDAM

Nugene

A blistering live set from the gravel-voiced blues troubadour, enhanced by young Dutch guitarist Dusty Ciggaar positively ripping up the joint

Pig Iron

SERMONS FROM THE CHURCH OF BLUES RESTITUTION

Off Yer Rocka

Classic British hard rock mavericks who deliver a muscular bombast ridden with killer leads and a sinister intent

Triggerfinger

BY ABSENCE OF THE SUN

Excelsior

Hard and heavy grunge rock from a Belgian power trio who will enslave you with thunderous blues riffage and a stash of smart, addictive hooks

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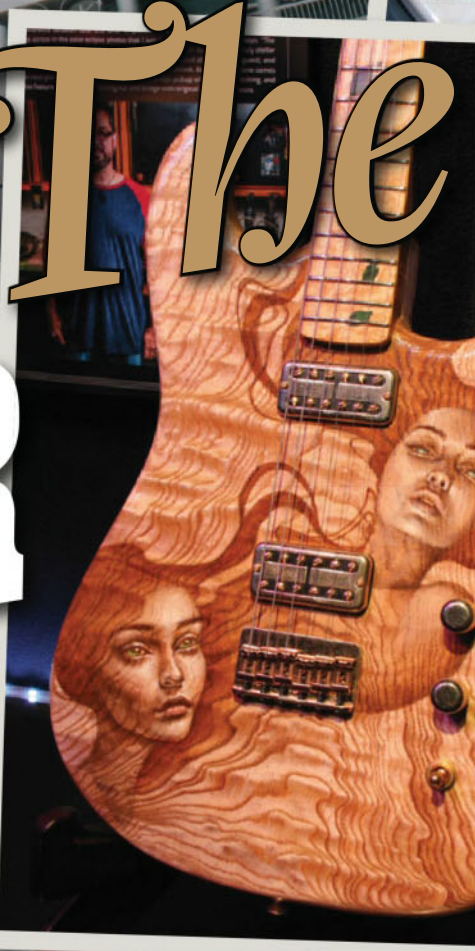
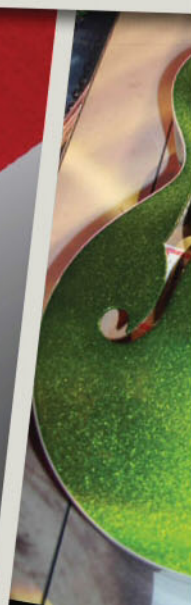
Fun Of The FAIR



The NAMM show in California is where the instrument trade gets its glad rags on. Roll up, roll up, and see what's new in guitars, amps, basses, effects and more...

Electric guitars 16
Amps 24
Effects 28
Acoustic guitars 32
Bass 36



COVER STORY
NAMM SHOW
Marshall
PLAYBOY
C. F. MARTIN & CO. INC
Twin Reverb-Amp

FENDER

American Icon

The centre piece of the 2015 Fender booth was a patriotic, flag-waving display of the revamped American Standard range. The whole thing was flanked by other US icons such as a NASA space suit (with a Tele slung over its shoulder) and Harley-Davidson bikes to hammer home the bonafide cultural importance of these seminal instruments. There were new editions to the standard range too, in a spread of humbucker-loaded guitars distinctive for their contrasting black/chrome bobbin combos. There was a duo of HSH and HH Strats, an HH Tele and an HH Jazzmaster; all have push/pull coil taps so normal single-coil service can be resumed when desired.

Talking humbuckers, also new are the American Deluxe and American Standard Shawbucker Stratocasters, each boasting a bridge humbucker newly designed by pickup guru Tim Shaw to provide the ultimate in humcancelling tone on a Fender.

If even more 'bucker action is desired, the latest signature for Dave Murray of Iron Maiden carries three of 'em: Seymour Duncan Hot Rails in the neck and bridge, plus a JB Jr SJBJ-1N rail style pickup in the middle.

For a totally new body shape the signature model for Sergio Vallin (guitar man of Maná, a huge Latin rock band) is Strattish in outline but with a tweak or two to the curves. It's an HSS model with no tone control and an unusual two-point Synchronized Trem incorporating individual block saddles.

Outside of that it was all about the limited runs and kooky Custom Shop designs. Most notable was the '10 for 15 Limited Edition Collection', 10 unusual guitar designs which will emerge one a month from March in batches of 500. Pictured left are the Double-Cut Telecaster and the Longboard Stratocaster. The latter was inspired by vintage surfboard designs and features a clear backplate so all the electronics are on show; pickups are Noiseless N3 single-coils with an Atomic Humbucker at the bridge. Available in 2015 only, the Sandblasted Ash series comes in Tele and Strat form and features a finish similar to heavily weathered wood. They have been stained either red or blue to effectively offset the blasted-out black wood grain.

The Custom Shop was celebrated with some beautiful pieces but all paled beside a 'Pine Cone Stratocaster' modelled after an antique Fabergé egg made in 1900. All 550 diamonds and 10 feet of 18-carat gold ribbon wire inlay contribute to a Strat fit for a Czar. It will travel the globe before being auctioned off later in the year.

FANO

New York-based builder Dennis FANO blew us away with his Starcaster-inspired GF6 a couple of years back and his latest model, the ML6, is another stunner. ML stands for 'missing link' and with this guitar Fano aims to bridge the gap between an SG and a Telecaster. It comes with a set-neck which is generally maple but fretboards can be maple or rosewood; choices on the body run from swamp ash through to mahogany or korina, pickup options count Lindy Fralin P90s, Lollar humbuckers or even TV Jones Filter'Trons, and as for a Bigsby or stop tailpiece, well, if you accept the challenge and the price tag, it's up to you.

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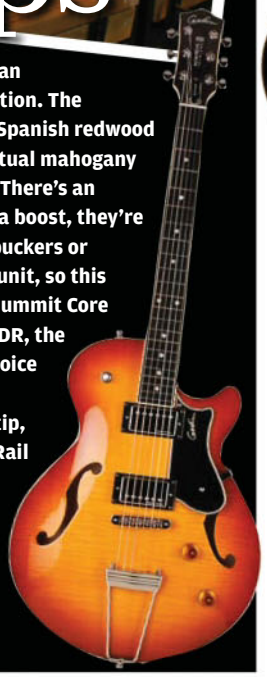
GODIN

Top Trumps

North American rock machines don't often herald from the Canadian side of the border but **GODIN** seems set on challenging that perception. The carved-top Summit Classic CT series has a chambered lightweight Spanish redwood body which has similar tonal qualities to mahogany; the neck is actual mahogany while the fretboards are Richlite and the scale is of course 24.75". There's an onboard High-Definition Revoicer for frequency tweaking (it's not a boost, they're at pains to point out) and a choice of Seymour Duncan P90s, humbuckers or P-Rails. P-Rails offer humbucker, single-coil and P90 tones in one unit, so this option would give you an exceptionally versatile instrument. The Summit Core CT is a similar animal except there's no HDR, the fretboard is rosewood, and the pickup choice is limited to P90s or humbuckers.

Continuing on the Spanish Cedar/P-Rail tip, the Passion Custom (left) sports said P-Rail in the neck and a Godin Custom Cajun single-coil in the twang position, plus the HDR system and a tremolo. Also, a *G&B* fave from 2014, the semi-solid Montreal Supreme (right) now has a thinline Light Burst Flame sibling.



ESP

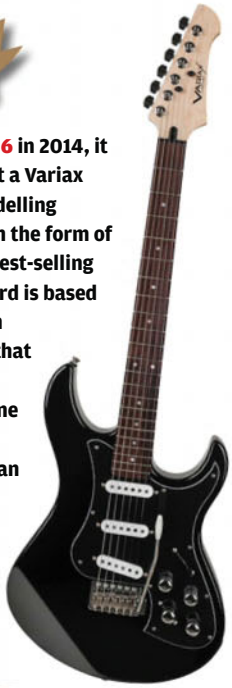
A-Grade Exhibits

Every year the **ESP** booth is home to any number of amazing custom creations but in this, the Japanese company's 40th anniversary year, they outdid themselves. The dozens of one-offs in the Exhibition Limited 2015 collection, as above, showcased the ESP luthiers' amazing skill and fevered imagination (even the most outlandish had little red 'sold' tickets by the end of show). The Eclipse, EC, MH and M7 Custom Shop 40th Anniversary models are so limited we'll probably only see a handful in the UK, but there were plenty more: the Gary Holt (Exodus/Slayer) signature came in three Eclipse-style flavours, the LTD set neck EC-1001FR (pictured below) packed EMGs and was much admired along with its stablemate the Seymour Duncan-loaded EC-1000 Evertune. Another stand-out, the natural-finished LTD M-1000SE S-type with its flamed top and Floyd Rose, was a refined beast indeed.

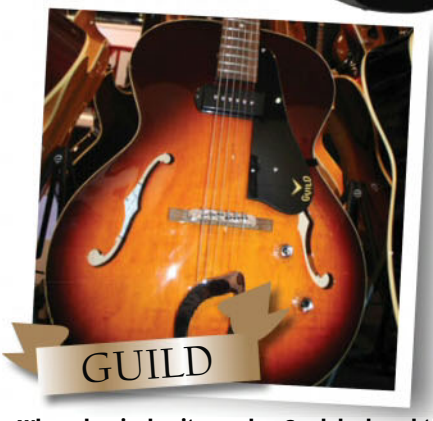
THE LOAR

THE LOAR have made a name specialising in making guitars inspired by instruments of the '20s and '30s but the new LH-302T and 304T thinlines embrace more 1950s electric ideals. They're both fully hollow 16"-wide archtops with a depth of 1.5", and the build is all maple bar the mahogany necks with rosewood boards. The LH-304T sports dual P90s while the 302-T has two humbuckers.

LINE 6



As Yamaha purchased **LINE 6** in 2014, it was perhaps inevitable that a Variax guitar with its onboard modelling technology would emerge in the form of its new parent company's best-selling Pacifica. The Variax Standard is based on a midrange Pacifica with vintage-voiced single coils that can now morph into any guitar sound you can imagine – plus by using the Variax Workbench software, you can mix and match a variety of pickup models and body constructions to create a custom instrument that can be loaded up into your guitar.



GUILD

When classical guitar maker Cordoba bought **GUILD** in 2014 there was concern for the electric range. Good news: all seems fine, and we even have this new extra-thin 1.9" Newmark T-50 Slim archtop in the range – notable as the only non-cutaway in the line. The top is spruce while back and sides are mahogany, and it's loaded with a SB-1F soapbar. We hear the new factory is now up and running and other new models are likely.

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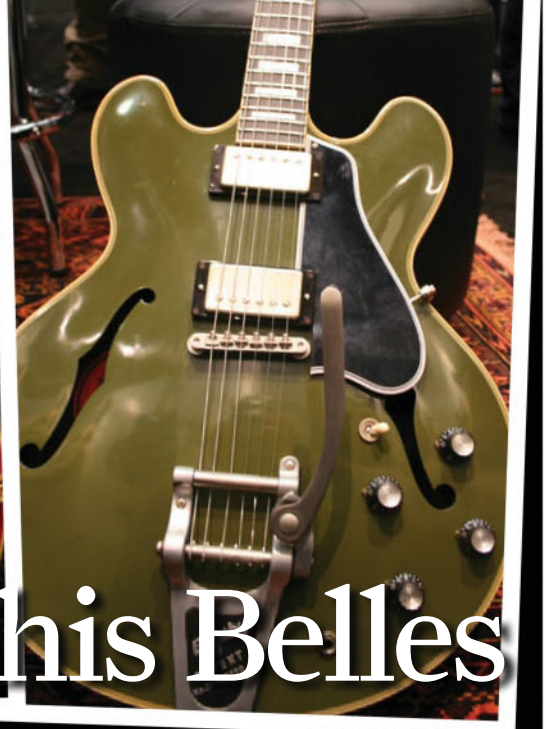
GIBSON

Memphis Belles



GIBSON announced its new Les Paul line in November so, as enticing as the new LP Deluxe, Jr and Supreme were, it was the creations of the Gibson Memphis section that wowed the crowds at the big G booth. Memphis builds all the company's production archtops, and this year's crop was truly something to behold. Admittedly most were limited runs (100-200) but the translucent cherry red ES-295 (above left) was gorgeous and the 'drab green' ES-335 warranted a more complimentary title for its dreamy finish. Each historic ES model has a new run in figured maple, as worn by the 335 shown on the right, and the semi-hollow ES-Les Paul also has some special runs including a goldtop version, a Custom-style black with gold hardware, whitetop, and cobra burst. There's even a Standard version with a Bigsby.

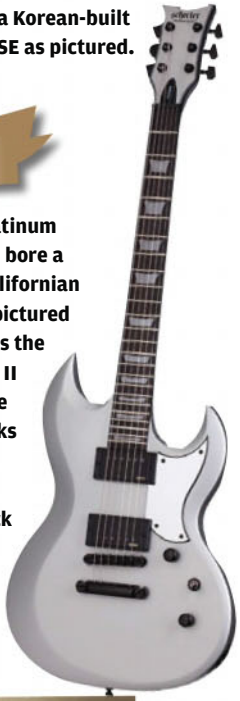
All non-VOS spec'd Memphis archtops will now wear an engraved f-hole symbol on the trussrod cover so you know where you stand; the revamped ES-335 and ES-339 Studio models are a case in point. They both now have smart black body binding, a re-shaped neck for greater stability, and rolled neck binding for comfort. Unusually for Gibson the build is all-maple, including the fretboards, which have been 'torrified' for durability. Both are available in cherry or sunburst.

The Custom Shop had some quirky shapes on show led by the super-thin and extra-wide hollowbody L-9 Cherry Sunburst (below left) which is a brand new outline for Gibson. The Ron Wood L5S Ebony Gloss (below right) is a slightly amended take on the '70s version with a smaller headstock and altered control layout, while the 17" Venetian Cutaway (middle) is an example of Gibson's 'Solid Formed' process, which means the solid top and back are pressed instead of carved to create the arch. This means they can get three tops from the same piece of wood that would supply one carved top. Good to see Gibson doing its bit to save the planet.

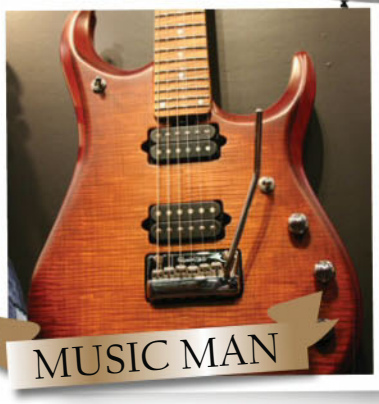
PRS

PRS had moved its stand out of the mayhem of the NAMM main hall to a private room upstairs where the company's 30th year could be celebrated with a certain decorum. Each of the PRS lines will offer a special anniversary Custom 24 guitar: there'll be a US-made Private Stock (with 60 guitars available), a US-made Core line (with an Artist option too), the vintage-inspired US-made S2, and a Korean-built SE as pictured.

SCHECTER



SCHECTER launched the Platinum Series (around £650) which bore a brand new shape for the Californian manufacturers in the S-II (pictured right). The line also features the S-type C-1 and LP style Solo II body shapes: all will feature EMG 57/66 pickups, set necks and the defining feature, platinum silver binding. Elsewhere, the through-neck 6, 7 and 8-string Banshee Elites are serious guitars sporting Supercharger pickups plus a Sustaniac bridge unit option.



MUSIC MAN

You can always be sure that at the Ernie Ball stand there will be a new **MUSIC MAN** John Petrucci signature – as a bonus, this year there was two. The JP15 BFR is the first production JP to host a roasted maple top and fretboard, and as you can see it's a looker. Electronics are as the JP13. Also new is the addition of an Artisan line to the through-neck Petrucci Majesty series with plush appointments such as gold hardware and rich translucent finishes on a mahogany body with an inset maple cap.

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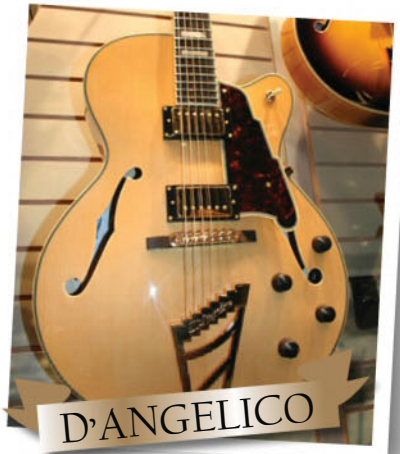
Hey Joe

IBANEZ

As ever, the **IBANEZ** booth was stacked to the rafters with enough new models to boggle even the hardiest mind. The cheapest-ever Satriani signature the JS140 (above left, around £600) was a standout, and as it was beside some special one-offs hand-painted by the great man himself, it was hard to miss. Paul Stanley is back with a full range of mirror scratchplate Iceman-esque models in tow plus there's a budget Paul Gilbert FRM150 Fireman (basically a reverse Iceman) now for a smidgen above £700. There were exotic-looking fan-fretted RG Iron Label 7- and 8-string prototypes that we're told should retail for under £1000, and for fans of Ibanez jazzers the Artstar SJ300 and SS300 solid archtops with flamed back and sides were also clocking in for under £1000. With so much on show, it's well worth a trip to www.ibanez.co.jp to peruse the plethora of other pointy rock machines birthed this year.

D'ANGELICO



The latest from **D'ANGELICO** is the EX-DH hollowbody which at 16" wide sits in the range between the small-bodied 15" EX-SS and standard 17"s such as the EX-175. There's an extra degree of comfort due to the size plus reduction in feedback tendencies too, which is handy, as the versatile Kent Armstrong humbuckers can take you far beyond the realms of jazzy tones.

GRETSCH

The hepcats at **GRETSCH** had an entirely new range of Brian Setzer Professional Collection hollowbodies on show. Most notably all Brian's guitars will now feature Setzer's TV Jones signature pickups. The Nashville line is modelled on the guitars in his killer vintage collection with trestle bracing matching that of his favourite '59 6120, while the Hot Rod series now comes in flame maple, top back and sides, with a smart two-tone finish (as seen in highland green, left) which means the sides are much paler than the top and back. The other highlight was the return of the 1950s New Yorker, a solid spruce archtop with single-coil pickup with vintage-style rubberised magnet and V-shaped mahogany neck.

RELISH

NAMM's Hall E lurks in the basement and is known as the lair of the more daring boutique builder. Under that banner it was the **RELISH** 'Jane' guitar that pricked our interest. This Swiss outfit have dreamed up a semi-hollow with an aluminium frame sandwiched by a choice of '3D' ash, cherry or walnut veneers for a unique resonance. The space-age part comes with two sensors that switch between the Good Tone humbuckers. They are tucked away near the tone pots and an LED informs which is selected – but accidents must surely still happen...

VIGIER

The new striking new 'Rock In Revolution' finishes of the **VIGIER** GV Rock range turned heads all weekend. This 'green matte' is more surfy seafoam to our eyes, while the 'yellow matte' smacked handsomely of the vintage TV variety – red and black are available too. More typically cerebral new Vigier innovations include a string dampener which eliminates that dreaded ping from above the nut, and there's the ZeroFret-S which has individual segments for each string which just pull out when in need of replacement; new ones cost under a quid.

FRAMUS

Current Bon Jovi guitar man Phil X has switched his allegiance from Yamaha to **FRAMUS** and the result the signature model you see before you. It's essentially a fat and wide necked solid with a choice of single pickup – the Arcane PX-8 humbucker, overwound for hot tones and beautiful highs, or the custom handwound PX90 soapbar with extra grind. The amiable Mr X insists the guitar comes complete with 'total awesomeness'.

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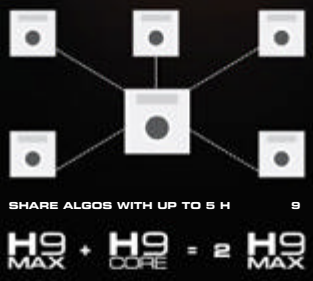

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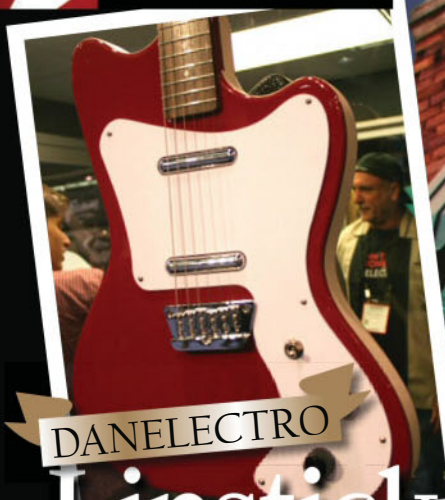
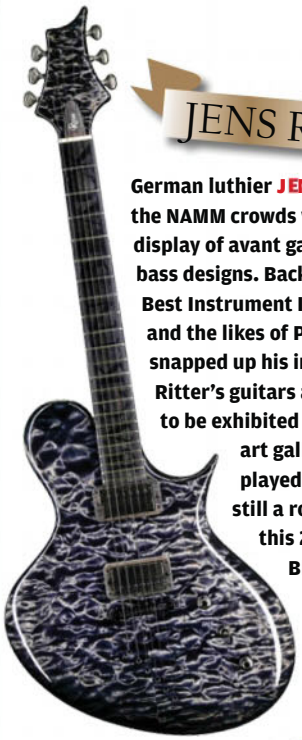


DANELECTRO
Lipstick Traces

Masters of alluring retro chic **DANELECTRO** have tweaked a few old favourites for 2015. The biggest innovation is the new '56' pickup which, they say, is closer in tone to the original units than ever before, boasting more dynamic range and a slightly hotter output to help harness authentic '50s tones. Guitars that sport the '56' are the '67 Dano, a more curvaceous take on the offset-waisted 67 Heaven, and the double-cutaway '63, which now comes in four sparkly 'metalflake' colours. The Convertible also returns, now with a piezo pickup in the bridge which is blendable with its '56' lipstick unit for greater sonic variety. The cutest of the bunch is the Baby Sitar. It's tuned like a regular guitar so those sitary tones actually come from the adjustable 'Buzz Bridge', and specs include the traditional lipstick pickup and masonite body.

JENS RITTER



German luthier **JENS RITTER** wowed the NAMM crowds with a stunning display of avant garde guitar and bass designs. Back in 2013 he won a Best Instrument In Show award, and the likes of Prince have since snapped up his instruments. Ritter's guitars are now as likely to be exhibited in museums and art galleries as to be played on stage but he's still a rocker at heart; this 2015 'Black In Black' creation celebrates his love of AC/DC.

FRET-KING

Trev Wilkinson's **FRET-KING** were offering a limited run of handbuilt Green Label guitars loaded with Fishman's innovative Fluence pickup system. The Single Width Fluences can shift between clean sparkle to overwound 'Texas' tones, while the Double Widths cover classic PAF to high gain. There are Eclat and Corona 70 guitars carrying the Doubles, while a Corona 60 is loaded with the singles.

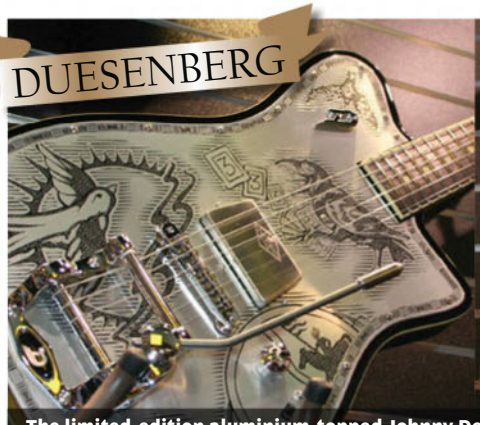
RICKENBACKER

When Pete Townshend came knocking on **RICKENBACKER**'s door to ask he could have a 1993 12-string model with a few choice modifications they were only too happy to oblige. The 1993 Plus has a neck which is an eighth of an inch wider, a more stable two-piece neck design and the 'Rose Morris' style f-hole. Pete's 1988 six-string signature is one of the most collectable Rickies ever made, and though not strictly a signature model the 1993 Plus is sure to sell like hot cakes.

CARVIN

Breaking news at **CARVIN** is that the company is splitting into two. They've created a new branch called **KIESEL** that will now handle production of guitars, while the Carvin branch will now focus on amps and audio equipment. Our understanding is that 'private stock' style instruments will now wear a Kiesel logo on the headstocks, whereas the rest will still bear Carvin. Carvin fans may be concerned, but if the new Greg Howe signature pictured –which most definitely has a Carvin decal – is a future pointer, then all is in safe hands. More news when clarification is at hand.

DUESENBERG



The limited-edition aluminium-topped Johnny Depp signature from **DUESENBURG** was so popular it's been made a production model for 2015, with reduced tattoo decals, an alder body, a JD-63 tapped single coil and a short version of the Diamond Deluxe Tremola. The new Alliance Series (right) is a super-thin semi-hollow archtop DC designed with the input of the Eagles' Joe Walsh. There's a 'Little Toaster' pickup at the bridge plus a noise-cancelling SingleTwin single coil at the neck. Apparently the inlays spell Joe's name in Morse code.

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NEW FOR 2015

THE LEGACY OF D'ANGELICO GROWS.

We are proud to introduce a brand new line of acoustic instruments to the D'Angelico family for 2015. These guitars cover a wide range of shapes and sizes, from dreadnought to archtop to jumbo—even an acoustic bass. Expertly-crafted and equipped with the Fishman INK-4 onboard preamp and pickup system, the new acoustic series is an exceptional addition to the D'Angelico legacy.

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MARSHALL Stack Attack

One of the undoubted highlights of this year's NAMM show – certainly for amp fans – was Marshall's decision to launch a modern reissue of the legendary Silver Jubilee 2555 stack. To give a bit of backstory: 1987 marked the 25th anniversary of Marshall Amplification, and the 50th year of Jim Marshall being in the music business, and so the Silver Jubilee Series was launched. The 2555 Silver Jubilee 100W head had a distinct sonic character, with innovative features like front-panel Pentode/Triode switching circuit and redesigned tone controls.

It became Slash's favourite amp, and players have been clamouring for it ever since. To accompany the 2555X are two silver vinyl-covered 4x12" speaker cabinets, the 2551AV angled front and the 2551BV straight front cabs, both loaded with Celestion 'Vintage 30' speakers. 2015 is the 50th anniversary of the birth of the iconic Marshall stack, and to celebrate the company has created two very special British-made limited edition speaker cabinets – the 812A-50 angled cabinet and 812B-50 straight cabinet, only available to buy during this anniversary year.

PEAVEY

PEAVEY unveiled the Classic 20 MH amp. This two-channel all-tube 20-watter is fuelled by two EL34 valves and three 12AX7/ECC83s that provide both vintage and contemporary sounds. Another Peavey debutant was the 6505 MH amp; modern metal fans should warm to this compact beastie, with two channels that have the same gain structure and voicing of its much-lauded big brother. And, rather than just get a birthday cake, Peavey decided to celebrate its golden anniversary with launch of two limited edition amps, the 50th Anniversary 6505 + head and the Classic 30 112 combo (pictured right). Both include a certificate of authenticity signed by Hartley Peavey himself.

TONE KING

Boutique amp lovers gathered to see the new TONE KING Imperial MkII combo. Among the updates is the new Ironman II compensated power attenuator. This comes with a built-in attenuator bypass switch so you can match your clean volume with the overdriven lead channel. A HF compensation switch means you can adjust compression, presence and brightness of your attenuated tone. Sweet!

TWO ROCK

The mission with the new TWO ROCK Akoya line is to combine all the performance and versatility people have come to expect from Two Rock with the vintage feel of an old blackface amp. Both the two-channel 50W dual tube rectified head and 4x10" combo boast a tube tremolo circuit and analog spring reverb and footswitch control over tone boost, overdrive and tremolo.

FENDER

FENDER came to NAMM armed with the really rather nice Hot Rod DeVille ML. Designed in conjunction with lauded player, engineer and producer Michael Landau, the new ML model is based on the Fender Hot Rod DeVille III, with tube circuitry and 60W output, two 12" speakers, spring reverb and an FX loop. Volume-switching and boost capabilities are just two of the cool options on offer.

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H&K

Trio Grand

HUGHES & KETTNER proudly announced the TriAmp Mark 3 head, combining the best of its predecessors with a bunch of new features that allow guitarists even more tonal sophistication and flexibility. The Mark 3's six – yes, six – channels claim to take you from classic '50s sounds all the way through to modern high-gain stuff, with up to 150W of valve power. This H&K is also the first amp to feature the Red Box AE, the latest version of the brand's DI output, designed to deliver authentic-sounding 4x12" cabinet ambience effects. Full MIDI control is also available through the included TSM-432 board.

BAD CAT

The baby of the new **BAD CAT** Bobcat bunch, the 5R (above left) is a Class A 5W combo that uses one 6SL7 in the preamp, while the amp is powered by one 6V6 power tube; it also comes with a Rip circuit that allows higher gain. Like its 20W and 100W cousins, the Bobcast 5R comes with spring reverb. Also on display was the Unleash V2 amp attenuator/ re-amplifier, with new features such as switchable impedance and silent recording options.

DUESENBERG

The new **DUESENBERG** Berlin amp and cab won plenty of hearts simply on their looks alone – an effect achieved by painting the wooden frames with a thin layer of metal particles, which are then aged by hand. This 45W dual-channel amp is equipped with two 6L6WGC-STR matched power valves and two 12AX7 preamp valves, while the semi open-backed cabinet is fitted with a Celestion Alnico Gold 8 ohm speaker for 50W power handling.

BLACKSTAR

The new ID:Core Beam from **BLACKSTAR** is a Bluetooth-equipped 10W guitar amp that's also designed to be the centrepiece of all your music-based endeavours. The Beam is equipped with six electric guitar, two bass guitar, two acoustic guitar and two acoustic simulator voices, and you can also play your MP3s through it at hi-fi quality.

VOX

One the new launches at the **VOX** stand was the Valvetronix VT20+ Classic, available – for a limited time only – in the famous Vox aesthetic complete with a traditional diamond grille. Using a 12AX7 for 'true tube tone', the VT20+ Classic features 99 expertly-voiced presets and a unique Power Level control to let you create power amp distortion at any listening level.

ROLAND

Guitar maestro Eric Johnson has teamed up with **ROLAND** to bring to the world the Eric Johnson Blues Cube Tone Capsule, available for both the Artist and Stage incarnations of the range. The capsule means that you can instantly re-voice your amplifier, giving you the custom tones that have met with Eric's approval after extensive comparisons with his late '60s plexi heads and Fender combos.

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Heart of Class

No sonic bravery is required to get the best out of the new Laney Lionheart L5 Studio. While this single-ended parallel Class A 5-watter possesses the same preamp configuration as its Lionheart brethren, it also has a DI output with cabinet emulation and USB connectivity. The L5 Studio also has the ability to run at a reduced output (all the way down to 0.5W). The result is vintage tones married to 21st century technology. If you don't fancy lugging around an amp but want some Lionheart sonics, the new IRT-Pulse preamp is also worthy of your attention. High gain is delivered thanks to a valve preamp powered by two ECC83s, and it's ideal for plugging straight into a PA. The IRT-Pulse is also designed for home use when either practising or recording. USB connectivity means it can plug straight into a computer, and away you go. With two knobs and four switches to contend with you can get to grips with it in seconds, but it still provides a surprising amount of versatility. Good heavens!

The new 2015 Crush series from ORANGE is taking the range to the next level. The 12, 20 20RT and 35RT all feature Orange's new CabSim circuit, which emulates an Orange 4x12" through the headphone/line out socket. Channel switching is available on 20W and 35W models, and the RT versions feature onboard reverb and an integrated chromatic tuner. The Crush 35RT also includes a fully buffered low-impedance FX loop.

Don't fear the RANDALL has always been our motto. We gulped at the Randall Satan 412 Ola Englund Signature cab and the EOD88 Element Of Doom metal head, but we could still appreciate their charms – yet our favourite was the new compact 50W Thrasher head, which can hold its own in terms of features against its 120W big brother. It has four 12AX7 preamp tubes, two 6L6 power amp tubes, and there's full EQ available on Channel 1.

SUPRO has released a trio of combos that place the tremolo after the reverb, which means you can recreate those classic original Valco/Supro tones. From the left: the 2x10" 1650RT Royal Reverb's 6L6 output stage can be configured for Class A or Class AB power at 35, 45 or 60W; the 1x12" 1648RT Saturn Reverb is armed with a 5U4 tube rectifier; and finally, the 1x10" 1622RT Tremo-Verb combo uses 6973 power tubes to deliver an impressive 25W.

The Shaman Retro 20 from PANAMA is designed to deliver more vintage sounds than its ordinary Shaman colleague, and by that we mean both classic tweed tones and Brit-style sonics. Also boasting a transparent FX loop and a switchable 5/10/20W power section, the amp has a cabinet handcrafted from Spanish cedar and Smoke Blue Zorrowood. Other all-tube Panama newbies include the rockin' Fuego 15 and the modern metal-focussed Inferno 100 heads.

There were droolsome amps aplenty over at MAGNATONE, and our cynical hearts went all a-flutter over the new Lyric combo. An eminently portable 10-watter offering Class A power from a single 6L6 tube and a Jensen P10R speaker, it's aimed to let you sound as punchy or as sweet as you like. An NFB switch provides settings of drive and harmonics by restructuring the power amp gain, providing fuller tone. Plus – and we don't care how shallow you think we are – just look how cool it is...

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EHX

Good Vibrations

Multiple goodies from Electro-Harmonix this year, so let's kick off, top left, with the Good Vibes, another entrant into the currently quite crowded Uni-Vibe market, with the usual chorussy and vibrato offerings plus an expression pedal connection. The big item in blue is the Super Pulsar tremolo, a fully analog pedal with tap tempo, stereo with right-side waveform phase control, a bunch of waveforms including sine, triangle and pulse, eight user presets and – interestingly – nine user-saveable rhythmic patterns. Top right is the Deluxe Electric Mistress XO, a nice, compact flanger unit, but still all-analog, with true bypass too.

Bottom left is the Bad Stone, a compacted reissue of one of EHX's odder vintage devices – a kind of wide-sweep Small Stone phaser. Centre is the Holy Grail Neo, a neat reworking of the Holy Grail reverb, with Spring and Hall sounds but dumping the old Flerb option in place of a Plate reverb. Finally, lower right, you'll espy the Octavix, a '60s-inspired octave fuzz with Volume, Boost and a level control for the octave-up sound.

Also new is the C9 Organ Machine, a very promising-sounding update on the EHX B9, with nine presets to let you get your Hammond, Farfisa or Mellotron on, and the Bass Soul Food, an affordable take on the Klon Centaur overdrive but angled towards low-end four-stringers.

DUNLOP

At just half the size of a regular wah, the DUNLOP Cry Baby Mini will fit on the most crowded pedalboard; it has three voicings, and it's true bypass. In other news, the Band Of Gypsys Fuzz Face Mini aims to replicate Jimi's mysterious snarly red fuzz used in many live appearances in the '69-'70 period.

CATALINBREAD

It's hard to pronounce the CATALINBREAD Antichthon, let alone describe it, but it's essentially a fuzz-plus-tremolo which takes its speed cues from your guitar's volume knob: wild... and very cool. Also new from Portland, Oregon is the Valcoder, a gnarly '60s tremolo, and the Talisman plate reverb.

LINE 6

LINE 6 are calling the Firehawk floorpedal the company's 'greatest hits pedal', and with 200 amp sims and FX there's certainly a ton of new and vintage-style sounds to play with. On top of that a Firehawk Remote app lets you create elaborate signal chains, experiment with tonal parameters, and connect with other users over your phone/tablet. Street price: about £349.

IBANEZ

The Tube Screamer remains the basis for about a zillion overdrives, and now IBANEZ has crammed the original circuit – complete with the JRC4558 chip – into a mini enclosure, with the Tone and Level controls moved to micro-knobs. Price: about £65.

DIGITECH

The DOD Boneshaker is a brutal-sounding distortion specially tweaked for down-tuned and baritone guitars, with a three-band parametric EQ. DOD's owners DIGITECH also unleashed a remarkable device which collared a 'best in show' award: the Trio Band Creator pedal, which listens to your guitar and generates bass and drum parts to match. It has seven music genres, each with 12 song styles plus a choice of time signatures, and it can recall three user settings.

TC ELECTRONIC

The Helix Phaser from TC ELECTRONIC is an adaptably swooshy little beast, but add in the free TonePrint Editor with its vintage recreations and artist specials and you get, well, even more. It's much the same deal with the Viscous Vibe, but this one's based on the Japanese-made Shin-Ei Uni-Vibe, as warbled live and on vinyl by Messers Hendrix, Trower and Gilmour.

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ELX-259-R2-ADV-EN-SEP14

T-REX

Delays Expected

Nothing, some say, beats the warm, lush repeats of a real tape delay: nothing, others point out, is quite so wearing as keeping these decades-old items in decent working order. Those ever-obliging **T-REX** people are leaping to the rescue with the Replicator, a proper, old-school tape delay that will show up all those digital emulators for what they are – and which should be both affordable and easy to keep running.

The Replicator uses custom easy-swap cassettes loaded with thick chrome tape from the USA, and it has two playback heads to add rockabilly slapbacks to the regular longer echo sounds. You can achieve chorus sounds as well as delays, and it's also tap-tempo, with two expression pedal inputs, so you can remotely alter delay time via the tape speed as well as the feedback level. Our picture shows the prototype: T-Rex is hoping to get production up and running by the autumn.

MOOG

There are two new additions to the MOOG Minifooger line. The MF Chorus is an analog pedal offering chorus, vibrato and slapback delay; the MF Flange is a 'bucket brigade harmonic manipulator' with voicing options.

BOGNER

Following on from the Uberschall and the Ecstasy BOGNER La Grange, surely inspired by a certain beardy trio from Texas. It's a British rock-voiced OD/boost that can blend between the different sounds you'd get from an amp's Bright and Normal channels.

Z.VEX

Reliably deranged as always, Z.VEX sent eyebrows shooting skywards when they debuted an item normally less than popular amongst boutique pedal folk – a multi-FX unit. The Bomb Pop is, more or less, a marriage between the Wah Probe, the Instant Lo-Fi Junky, the Super Hard-On boost, the Double Rock and the Fuzz Factory 7, but the trick is that you can wire them in any order you want. Also new: the lower-cost Woolly Mammoth Vexter and the expanded Woolly Mammoth 7, and the Midi Light Show, a system which syncs music with visuals. Add laptop and a controller, and away you go.

WAY HUGE

Like the original, the WAY HUGE Blue Hippo is an analog chorus but this MkII adds a vibe switch for pitch-wobble. The Saffron Squeeze MkII adds gain, tone and attack knobs, and the Saucy Box is a new 'organic' overdrive.

BOSS

Custom switchers to take care of players' tangled pedalboards are increasingly common these days, and now BOSS is taking the idea mainstream with the ES-8. This all-analog device comes with eight loops and looks pretty flexible, with the ability to swap routing order, create parallel FX chains and to select buffers for each loop, and it comes with a display to make sense of it all. Otherwise it was a quiet NAMM for Boss, with just a new BB-1X Bass driver pedal, a compact volume pedal, and the VE-1 Vocal Echo for singers.

65 AMPS

Fuzz is big right now for sure, and 65 AMPS has cooked up a toothsome germanium-powered pair: the Colour Face, inspired by the classic warm-sounding Arbiter Fuzz Face, and the Colour Boost, which takes matters in a spankier, more British treble boost-type fuzz direction. US price is $275.

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MARTIN

Baked-In Tone

Torrefied tops are everywhere now, as you'll see in this NAMM report, and Martin's 'Vintage Tone System' uses the baked-wood method to 'emulate the top and braces of a specific era'. Getting down to new models, though, first we have the Dreadnought Junior (above left), a solid sitka and sapele 24" scale picker due to cost £599; with an asking price considerably more, the D-35 Brazilian 50th Anniversary (above right) celebrates a half-century of the deep-sounding three-piece-back dreadnought, mixing a Braz centre section with Madagascar rosewood elsewhere.

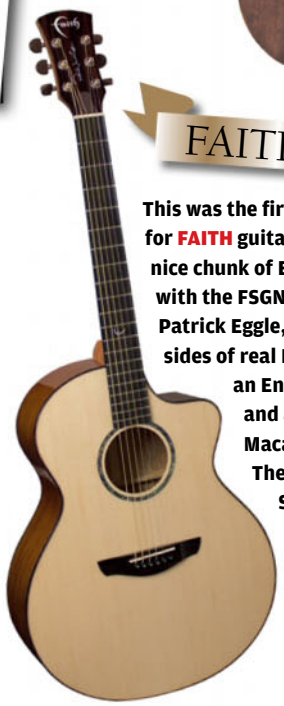
Pictured on the right is one of our favourites, the very nice-looking 000-15M Burst, a shaded-top take on the ever-reliable mahogany 000 with a £1299 price tag, while next to it is the latest in the often Gibson-inspired CEO series, the CEO-8, a D-Tar Wavelength-equipped jumbo with decorated pickguard and even double parallelogram markers, and a £4999 ticket.

Another new guitar for 2015 is the OM-28 Authentic 1931, based on a guitar owned by Mike Seeger, with Adirondack top and Madagascar rosewood back and sides plus the aforementioned VTS treatment at £5999. We also saw a bunch of special-release models including the £3499 SSC-OM35-15, a three-piece-back OM in a limited edition of 50; the SS-GP42-15, an extremely ornate sitka and koa Grand performance model at a mighty £7999; the D-41 Purple Martin Cocobolo, a swallow-inlaid showstopper with ornate pickguard and fingerboard at a price over nine grand; and the Custom Shop CS-00041-15, a VTS/Adirondack and Cocobolo 000 in a limited edition of 75 with an asking price of £7400.

VINTAGE

This is the new VINTAGE VGE800N Gemini baritone guitar, which joins the Paul Brett signature line of six- and 12-strings, launched in 2012. This is no long-scale monster: the idea is that you can choose to tune it normally or fit some heavy-gauge strings for a sonorous, piano-like baritone sound. The build is solid sitka and solid mahogany, and the antique finish and twin scratchplates give it a fine look.

FAITH



This was the first time at NAMM for FAITH guitars, and they took a nice chunk of England with them with the FSGNCLPT. Designed by Patrick Eggle, it has back and sides of real London plane, plus an Engelmann spruce top and a fingerboard of Macassar ebony. There's also a Honeyed Sycamore version, also made with real UK-sourced timber. Fine guitars at around the £1500 mark.

TAYLOR

Having re-worked the rosewood 800 range, TAYLOR has turned to the maple 600 series. The main change is, again, torrified sitka tops, aiming to bring out maximum richness and dynamics. Add to that new top thicknessing, maple-specific back bracing, and the latest super-thin finishes allied to a hand-rubbed 'brown sugar' colour, and you've got a very different-sounding 600 series. Models include the 614ce Grand Auditorium, 616ce Grand Symphony, 618ce Grand Orchestra and the 12-string 656ce.

CARVIN

CARVIN is tackling the problem of portable sound with the new S600 Stagemate PA system, complete with battery power. With a six-channel mixer – a definite improvement on the old S400's four channels – it comes with a 3-band EQ for each channel and promises plenty of playing time on a single charge. There are also some new enclosures with a choice of 1x10" and 2x10" speakers.

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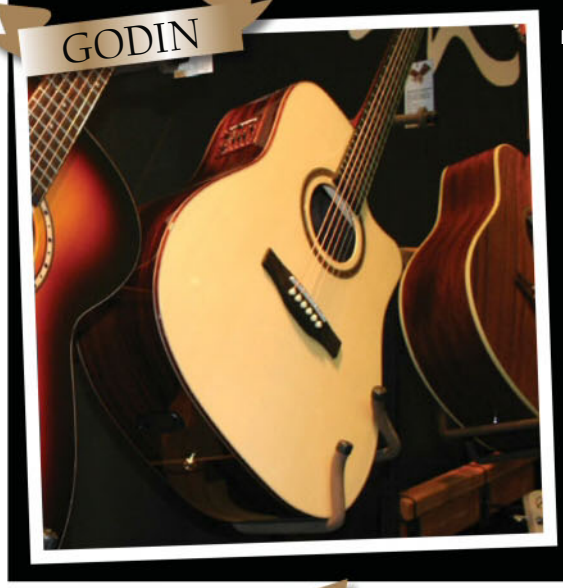
Deco Mania

D'ANGELICO

The name **D'ANGELICO** is synonymous with legendary handmade New York jazz guitars, but the current company uses overseas production and has just announced its first-ever acoustic line. There are eight models in total, and all come with a factory piezo pickup system. Above left is the SJ-600, a cutaway jumbo; on the right is the flagship of the range, the non-cutaway acoustic roundhole archtop EX-63, complete with ornate tailpiece and stepped pickguard design. Others include the Gramercy (rosewood) and Mercer (sapele) Grand Auditoriums, the Bowery, Lexington and Brooklyn dreadnoughts, and the Mott flattop cutaway bass.

GODIN



From Canada, the two acoustic brands from the Godin empire, **SIMON & PATRICK** and **SEAGULL**, both get a brand new body shape this year to join the familiar dreads, mini-jumbos, parlours and folks – the Concert Hall, a very welcome medium-sized OM-type design. The Seagull versions include the Artist Concert Hall with a dark teardrop sunburst and a narrower nut; the S&P line is headed by the Showcase Rosewood Concert Hall, in solid rosewood and solid spruce, with an ebony fingerboard and a slotted headstock.

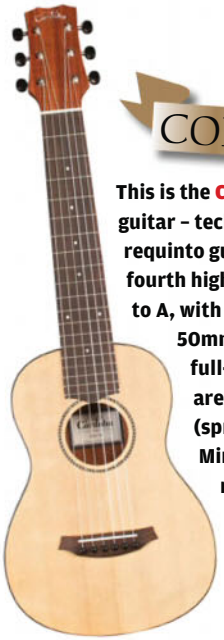
HUSS & DALTON

Those **HUSS & DALTON** people have cooked up a load of fine things for 2015, and since we love their sunbursts, we picked on those. Above left is a new 12-fret version of the 14-fret Crossroads reviewed in *G&B* last year; in the middle is the MJ Crossroads Deluxe, a flamed maple jumbo with all the trimmings; and on the right is the prototype DS-12 Crossroads, a '30s style 12-fret dreadnought with a lovely small-pattern sunburst in sitka and mahogany.

EPIPHONE

The Advanced Jumbo name joins the **EPIPHONE** range in 2015 with the release of the AJ-45ME. Part of the Masterbilt line, the new guitar lacks the original AJ's rosewood construction and posh inlays, but it's a long-scale round-shoulder dread with solid Sitka top with hand-scalloped bracing and a vintage sunburst finish, solid mahogany back and sides, and a Shadow Sonic preamp system linked to a NanoFlex pickup. Price will be around £439.

CORDOBA



This is the **CORDOBA** mini classical guitar – technically a form of requinto guitar, being tuned a fourth higher than normal, from A to A, with a 20" scale length but a 50mm nut to keep that full-sized guitar feel. There are three versions: Mini M (spruce and mahogany), Mini R (spruce and rosewood), and Mini O (the exotic option with ovankol top, back and sides). Prices should start around £200.

LARRIVÉE

As well as a bunch of ukuleles in all sizes from baritone to soprano, **LARRIVÉE** have unveiled their first redesign to the classical format in 30 years, with a fresh OO-size body combined with all-new bracing and a top and bracing of high-altitude Austrian spruce. A new acrylic urethane finish is being rolled out across the range; 2015 will also bring more custom stuff, including koa and Peruvian walnut.

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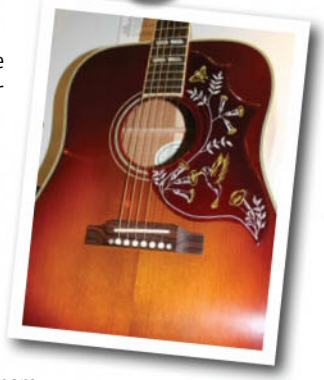
GIBSON

Beyond Vintage

The Les Paul range for 2015 from **GIBSON** may already be proving controversial but they're playing it safer with the acoustic range. There are new specs for the ever-popular J-45 and Hummingbird reissues; these 'Vintage' models come, yes, with thermally-cured Adirondack spruce tops, plus hot hide glue construction and hand-sprayed nitro VOS finishes. For those looking for more up-to-date specs, the Les Paul Acoustic is a cutaway jumbo model with a sitka spruce top, rosewood back and sides, a round-profile mahogany neck with trapezoid markers on a rosewood board,and the Gibson G-Force automatic tuning system. More than that, an electronics system offers onboard FX including reverb and delay, and blends three sources – mag, piezo and mic – to give a range of sims from dobro to 12-string to archtop and many more.



ASHDOWN

Ably demoed at NAMM by Adrian Legg, the ASHDOWN Woodsman acoustic amps come with handsome tooled coverings and in three sizes: the £149 25W Parlour with 1x8" speaker and digital reverb; the £279 40W Classic with added HF horn, more inputs and tone control plus phase reverse, notch filter and XLR DI out; and the £369 65W 2x8" Jumbo with expanded EQ for the Mic channel, more reverbs and an FX loop.

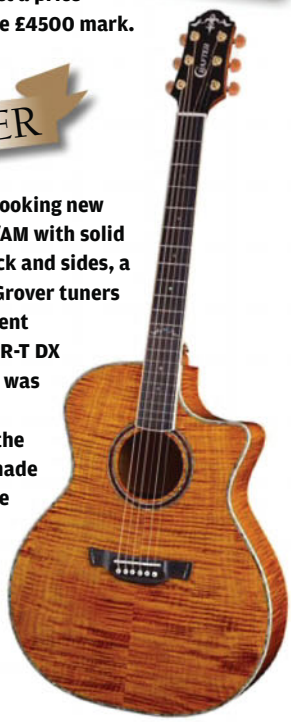
LOWDEN

If LOWDEN guitars have been too large under the arm for you in the past, then you'll love the size and the sound of the neatly-named Wee Lowden 40th Anniversary. With a redwood top and Indian rosewood back and sides, this cutie has a 610mm/24" scale and comes with all the upmarket timber trimmings of its larger brethren. Expect a price somewhere around the £4500 mark.

BEDELL

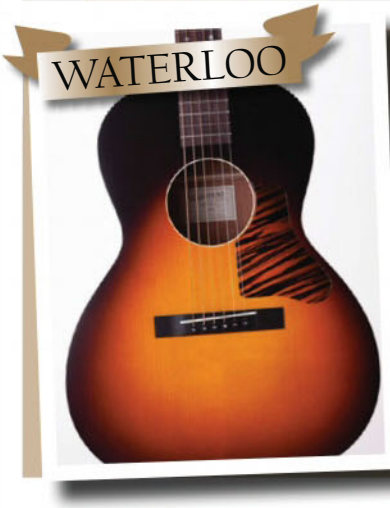
Touted as 'the ultimate forest stewardship guitars', the BEDELL Blackbird Vegan range are handbuilt in Oregon with salvaged Sitka spruce tops, Western big leaf maple backs and sides, hard rock maple necks, and walnut bridges and fingerboards. The finish is a translucent nitro blackburst and there are three models, dreadnought, orchestra and parlour, all with a case and a K&K pickup ready installed. Expect prices around £1699.

CRAFTER



This is the very posh-looking new CRAFTER GAE-750TM/AM with solid figured maple top, back and sides, a wider 1.75" nut, gold Grover tuners and an LR Baggs Element undersaddle plus an LR-T DX preamp. Also on show was the DGXE-ROSE, a 'premium' version of the Dragon Anniversary made of solid German spruce and solid rosewood, and upgraded electrics with a Premium preamp and an added soundboard sensor.

WATERLOO



The handsome back-to-basics WATERLOO line from Collings Guitars of Austin, Texas has first given birth to the WL-14 (from £1,999). Inspired by cut-price prewar flattops, the WL-14 comes with two bracing options – X-bracing for a Gibson L-00 type sound, or ladder bracing for a drier, more evocative Kalamazoo-style blues plunk. You can also choose between an adjustable truss rod or simple neck reinforcement. New prototypes on show at NAMM included a compelling 14-fret jumbo based on a vintage Regal Recording King and a delightful 12-fretter taking inspiration from the rare and desirable Kel Kroydon, a super-light Gibson-built budget model from the '30s.

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FENDER
Start To Finish

As always there were plenty of new bass-centric delights to behold at the Fender stand. Amongst the many highlights was the new Deluxe Active Precision Bass Special Okoume (above left), with a body made from the African hardwood, complete with straight grain and distinctive reddish hue, a slim Jazz Bass neck, and active electronics; it all adds up to a sophisticated and tonally versatile experience. RRP is £934.80, as is its Precision counterpart, while the five-string Jazz Bass version is £1018.80.

Another bass with a finish that caught the eye was the Limited Edition Sandblasted Ash Jazz Bass (pictured centre) where the transparent finish (either sapphire blue or crimson red) is sandblasted, leaving the surface grain pattern uniquely textured. Both Precision and Jazz versions have price of £1342.80. The Standard Series welcomes a new Dimension Bass IV (above right, £658.80) for those looking for humbucking goodness, while Fender amp fans have the mouthwatering prospect of a new lightweight dual-channel Class D Bassman 500 (£958.80) to look forward to in 2015.

LANEY

LANEY came to NAMM armed with its new valve/Class D Nexus Studio Live amp head. Fitted with twin power amplifiers giving the player up to 2 x 500W into 4 Ohms, it also has reverb, chorus, octave and reverb FX and a compressor, a three-band EQ with sweepable mids, a Tilt knob for the 'seesaw' EQ and a Touch knob to alter the preamp dynamics.

RICKENBACKER

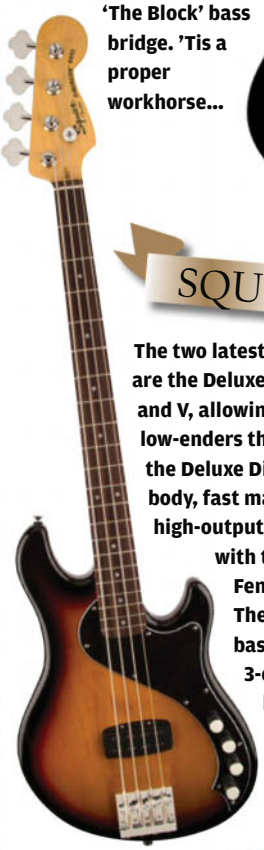
They're not known for bringing out too many new models or variations, so when RICKENBACKER presents something at NAMM, it's a big deal. It's certainly good news for bass lovers, as the new Rickenbacker 4001S is a droolsome instrument that builds on the charms that made the likes of Chris Squire and Macca fall for them. With rounded edges on the binding, dot inlays and an improved dual truss rod system, it's a worthy new bass addition.

DUESENBERG

Plenty of Deutsche deliciousness to be had at the DEUSENBERG stand, with the new 34" scale Triton bass being just one of the 2015 attractions. This has an American alder body with top binding, a bolt-on hard rock maple neck, triple Duesenberg SingleTwin pickups and a five-way control switch as well as a newly-designed 'The Block' bass bridge. 'Tis a proper workhorse...

SQUIER

The two latest basses from SQUIER are the Deluxe Dimension Bass IV and V, allowing budget conscious low-enders the chance to sample the Deluxe Dimension's offset body, fast maple neck, single high-output humbucking pickup with three-band EQ and Fender Hi-Mass bridge. These latest Squier basses are available in 3-colour sunburst, black, and crimson red transparent gloss finishes.



PEAVEY

Alongside the new Headline 1000 bass head, PEAVEY also unveiled a couple of even more compact amps. Weighing less than 6lbs, the MiniMax delivers 500W and has DDT speaker protection as well as a MiniMax pre-gain control with TransTube gain boost to add tube-like crunch to your sound. Its MiniMega cohort is a 1000W head that weighs only 9lbs, has four-band EQ and is designed with both live and studio use in mind.

ASHDOWN

Social Security

The **ASHDOWN** B-Social amp is something new. A 75W stereo desktop bass amp with wireless and USB DAW connectivity, it's also designed to be an entertainment system, allowing you to stream the music of your choice. As well as being able to play wirelessly anywhere in the house, a second input allows you to jam with another bass player – or, naturally, an acoustic or electric guitar player. More traditional new Ashdown offerings include upgrades to the ABM range with a new 9-band EQ system, and the new Retroglide 800 amps, built for funk in every way.

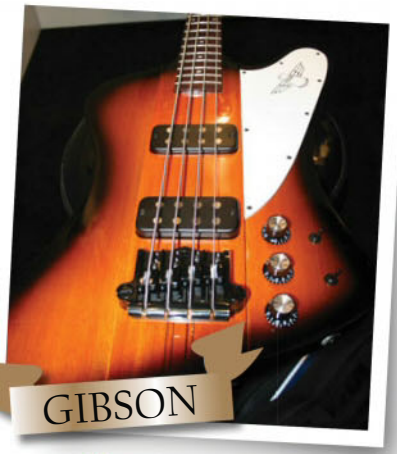
MUSIC MAN

Anyone who bet on **MUSIC MAN** releasing a through-neck version of its famous StingRay bass have just won big. Both the four and five-string versions feature a 3-piece maple neck with a rosewood fingerboard and an ash body. There will be a number of finishes and pickup configurations available, and the four-string models will come with 2- or 3-band EQ options. The new Ernie Ball Flatwound strings were also released at the NAMM 2015 show.

ESP

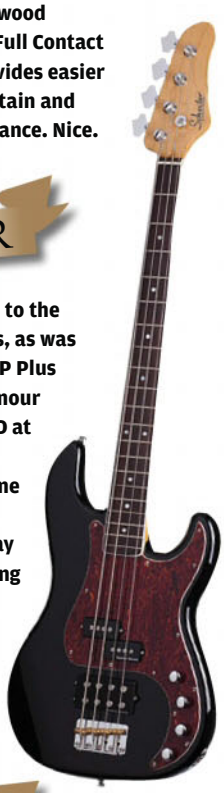
With **ESP** celebrating its 40th anniversary, the amount of weird and wonderful gear at its booth was way above safety levels. Despite all this, the signature series release in conjunction with jazz great Bunny Brunel still stood out. The BB-1005FLQM BOR, with a maple neck and ebony board, Aguilar pickups and Hipshot bridge is a true class act. Also on display were new sig models for Slayer's Tom Araya and funk maestro Pancho Tomaselli.

GIBSON



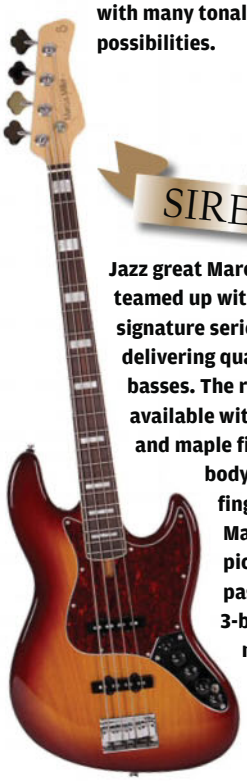
Sure, the **GIBSON** stand had a load of nice six-strings, but who cares when there's the new Thunderbird bass to moon over? Precisely. The rockers' favourite has been overhauled from top to toe, with improved electronics, a thicker rosewood fingerboard and a Babicz Full Contact Hardware Bridge that provides easier adjustment, improved sustain and all-round general sonic nuance. Nice.

SCHECTER



The addition of the Model T to the Session Series was big news, as was the launch of the Diamond-P Plus (pictured). Fitted with Seymour Duncan pickups (an SMB-4D at the bridge, an SPB-3 at the neck), it has a Master Volume knob with a series/parallel push-pull pot and a four-way rotary selector, the aim being to combine vintage looks with many tonal possibilities.

SIRE



Jazz great Marcus Miller has teamed up with **SIRE** to launch a signature series aimed at delivering quality, affordable basses. The retro V7 (left) – available with swamp ash body and maple fingerboard, or alder body and rosewood fingerboard – has Marcus Super Jazz pickups and an active/passive preamp with 3-band EQ. The more modern-styled M3 has a mahogany body and MM-style humbuckers.

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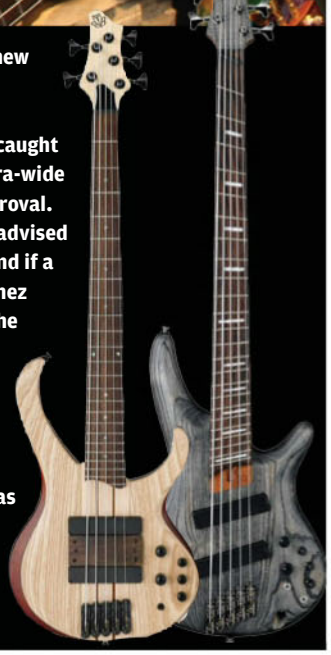
Good Wood

IBANEZ

IBANEZ had a strong bass presence at NAMM including some new SR models such as the SR755 five-string (pictured above) with Nordstrand pickups and Ibanez Custom electronics with a brand-new three-band EQ. The SR305B (pictured below) also caught the eye, while the CAP EXF-N2 with its arched top and the extra-wide slots of the Accu-cast B120 bridge also met with plenty of approval. Lovers of a high C-string and a 33" scale length would be well advised to check out the woody-looking BTB33-NTF (pictured right), and if a stained finish is your kinda thang then Ibanez have you covered,with the SRFF805 (pictured far right) – and that's before you get to the Bartolini pickups, the Mono Rail-V bridge and the fanned frets, as well as the aforementioned Ibanez custom electronics. It all adds up to a whole lotta bass.



AMPEG

The new SCR-DI Bass DI with Scrambler Overdrive from AMPEG is designed to deliver a huge range of classic tones. The unit's three-band footswitchable EQ section comes with Ampeg's Ultra-Hi and Ultra-Lo circuits for flexible tone shaping, and the Scrambler overdrive circuit is specifically tailored so that you can access some SVT-style grit, grind and sag at a moment's notice.

ORANGE

You can read about the joys of the ORANGE OB1-300 amp in our exclusive review in the last issue. However, it couldn't compete with the 'WHAT?' nature of the news that Orange are planning on releasing an actual bass guitar. Well, they brought some prototypes of an O-Bass model to gauge response. Our view? It's a lovely little affordable bass.

WARWICK

The new Stuart Hamm signature model from WARWICK (above) has an alder body and a three-piece birds eye maple neck. It also has a Hipshot D-Tuner, two active EMG pickups in MM and J formation and is an instrument worthy of the man. Another highlight was seeing the Star Bass SC, made for Guy Pratt; based on a Framus model of old, it boasts cool sliding pickups. The Streamer LX Ltd Ed 2015 (right) and it's Corvette counterpart (far right) are also well worth checking out.

PJB

Debuting at NAMM this year were the Quantum Series line of combos from PHIL JONES BASS. As always they were small but perfectly formed, and the 350W Quantum 800 (pictured) and the 75W Quantum 400 are fitted with PJB Custom 2.5" drivers that can handle a five-string bass with ease. These new PJB portables can run off AC or battery power, and are fitted with Bluetooth technology.

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C9 ORGAN MACHINE

The latest organ machine springboards off the game changing B9 to mine another rich vein of classic gold and deliver 9 new, definitive sounds, featuring a collection of some of the coolest electric organ and vintage electronic keyboard sounds ever. Like the B9, it delivers precise control over percussive click, modulation, attack/sustain, drawbar setting and high frequency content. Transform your instrument or use together with the B9 for dual keyboard possibilities!

With its gain stage and signal path optimized for bassists and guitarists who want more low-end definition, this pedal's clean boost and natural overdrive will really enhance your sound. Adjustable clean blend for maximum versatility plus boosted power rails for more headroom and definition. Active pickups? No problem with the switchable -10dB pad. Selectable true or buffered bypass, too!

BASS SOUL FOOD

TRANSPARENT OVERDRIVE

OCTAVIX

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'Scuse me while I kiss the sky.

SUPER PULSAR

stereo tap tremolo

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Destination STARS

Back to record in their native country for the first time in 20 years, UFO are looking to be in fine form. Guitarists Vinnie Moore and Paul Raymond bring **Michael Heatley** up to date

With well over 30 members having featured in UFO over the past four and a half decades, the 'U' in 'unidentified' has often been all too apt. The turnover of guitarists alone has been pretty eyewatering, but these days fans know exactly who they'll be getting: Vinnie Moore, the Delaware-born hard rock star who began his career with an onslaught of solo work and instruction material in the mid/late '80s and who joined UFO in 2003, and Paul Raymond, first a singer/keyboardist in Chicken Shack and Savoy Brown, who joined UFO as a keyboardist/guitarist in 1976 and who has remained in the band's approximate orbit – if you include Michael Schenker's MSG and Pete Way's Waysted – ever since. *Guitar & Bass* sat down with the two of them to catch up with all things UFO...

Gear

Vinnie Moore
Dean Vinman and Fender Stratocaster guitars, Marshall amp through Engl cab, DOD 250 and Ibanez Tube Screamer pedals

Paul Raymond
Vintage Paradise guitar, Marshall amp and cabs

Vinnie Moore

With the February 2015 release of *A Conspiracy Of Stars*, American Vinnie Moore has made the same number of UFO studio albums as his famous predecessor Michael Schenker did in his original run in the band (although Schenker did rejoin and make three more). He's the band's second longest-serving lead guitarist and has made one more studio album than 1979 Schenker replacement Paul Chapman.

'I grew up with UFO, being a fan,' Moore explains, 'and used to play their tunes in my bedroom when I was learning guitar – so it's surreal that I've now been in the band 12 years. I don't know they were ever as big in America as in Europe. They had a hardcore following of people who had seen them. Because I'd grown up with them and that kind of music in general, I didn't feel it was a stretch, something I had to work on – I felt like I fitted in naturally.'

The new album came together in Britain – a new experience for Vinnie, the others since his 2003 arrival all having all been cut in Germany. 'For this one Phil [Mogg, singer] wanted to stay closer to home, and it was time to try something new. I felt it was time for new blood...'

Vinnie writes the majority of the music in his Delaware home studio and sends tunes to other members before they get together to rehearse. 'It's a matter of deciding which material is the stronger, making arrangement changes here and there, sorting through stuff. It's like the homework is done, and when we get together we start gelling as a band.'

He believes the result is 'a strong record', picking out *Devil's In The Detail* and *Messiah Of Love* as favourite tracks. *Devil's In The Detail* has a Thin Lizzy-esque attack, possibly down to producer Chris

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UFO in 2015 (l-r): Rob De Luca (bass), Phil Mogg (vocal), Andy Parker (drums), Vinnie Moore and Paul Raymond

'Improvising the solos is what makes tonight different from last night'

Tsangarides, while *Ballad Of The Left Hand Gun* gives Moore a rare opportunity to show off his slide playing. 'When I first wrote that I was just playing the chords. I thought it would be cool to make like an old blues guy in the early days of playing guitar, so I went for that with the slide.'

Vinnie is mostly using two guitars these days: in the studio is a Warmoth parts guitar, currently kept with a high action for slide, and another, the delightfully named Dean Vinman, which does double-duty in the studio and on stage. 'To get different sounds I switch pickups in different guitars so I have tonal options; they don't all sound exactly the same.

'The Vinman is used on 90 per cent of the record, and I have a couple of Strats that I used to double the rhythm. It seemed to work out really well. Whenever you're doing something clean that needs to be bright and pop out, I use the Strat for that.'

Amp-wise, Vinnie now favours a 1980 Marshall JMP MkII. 'It sat around for a long time before I started using it a couple of years ago. It sounds really good, so I've been using it for all my stuff.' The addition of a DOD 250 pedal in front of it and occasionally a Tube Screamer 'makes it sing more.' He combines this with a 4x12" Engl cab packed with Celestion Vintage 30 speakers.

UFO is a band with a big history, and this means only a limited number of new songs will make it to the set for this spring's UK tour. 'I need to email Mr Mogg and find out which we're going to be playing,' he notes. 'I bet he already knows. I'd guess *Precious Cargo, Devil's In The Detail, Messiah Of Love* and *Ballad Of The Left Hand Gun*. I'd like to do at least three from this record, but it's really hard... there's such a back catalogue. There are songs the fans really want to hear, and if you don't do those they aren't happy.'

Fans have also been known to object when solos from records back in the day are tampered with, leaving Moore walking a fine line. 'It's weird,' he confirms. 'Even if I go out and play my solo music, which I'm about to do with Uli Roth, I'll be playing songs I wrote in the '80s. I'm not going to sound like the guy who did the original recordings because I'm not really that guy any more. So whoever played those UFO songs back in the day, be it Chapman or Schenker, if they were playing those songs now... who knows what they would be doing?

'If a solo is an integral part of the song that has to be there you play it, but otherwise you play in the moment. It's the perfect time to interact with the crowd – every night there's something different. Improvising is what makes tonight different from last night, going with the feel of the room at that particular moment.'

After the previously-mentioned solo US tour with former Scorpion Roth – 'we've known each other for quite a while; when I first joined UFO he was our opening act' – will come an as-yet untitled instrumental solo release on his own Mind's Eye Music label. Vinnie also has a side project, power trio Red Zone Rider, to promote, but he's reluctant to predict UFO's future.

'I just go with the flow. If you'd told me when I joined the band I'd be there for 12 years, I never would have thought it. We all like one another, which is important. There's always friction between band members when making a record or touring – that's to be expected, it's like a marriage – but for the most part we get on really well; that's the key.'

Paul Raymond

Classical training on keyboards in his youth gave Paul Raymond 'the foundation to do anything' – but the guitar came into his life in the mid-'60s, and it proved a fine way of getting more work. He taught himself on an acoustic guitar and ended up playing it left-handed and strung the wrong way up, like bluesmen Albert King and Otis Rush. 'I didn't realise that until I started looking at their guitars and realising "Hey, these guys play like me!" In some ways it's a blessing because there are things I can play upside down you can't play the right way up! I have struggled at times; sometimes I struggle with Vinnie's stuff. Michael's ➔

MOORE GUITAR

Vinnie Moore toured America with Michael Schenker in 1999, four years before he took the UFO lead guitar berth, sharing a backing band with him. 'That was the first time I'd met him, and I've jammed with him since being in UFO. And Paul Chapman came to one of my guitar classes in Florida. He's living in Melbourne, Florida, now and he came to one of my clinics.'

One thing Moore, 50, shares with mercurial German Schenker is a passion for playing. 'It's one of those things that comes naturally; I don't have to force myself to do it. It still excites me, it's not work, I just love doing it.'

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Paul with his left-handed, righty-strung Vintage Paradise

Listen up

UFO
A Conspiracy Of Stars
(2015)
An expectedly consistent outing for a band that's been there, done it and bought the T-shirt. And it's made in Britain!

PAUL RAYMOND
Rewind 50
(2015)
'I've tried to do a tribute song to each of the different bands I've been with.' The concept works – and it also marks a fantastic and still ongoing half-century career

VINNIE MOORE
Red Zone Rider
(2014)
Vinnie Moore, Kelly Keeling and Scot Coogan channel Zeppelin, Mountain, Grand Funk and Rainbow in an enjoyable retro effort

was okay, I could get away with that, but Vinnie's is a little bit more complex. But I've never been defeated yet – let's put it like that.'

Paul contributes guitar and keyboards on stage, but his songwriting is nearly always on guitar. 'It's kind of a mystery instrument to me! I know the names of chords, but with single-note stuff I'm blissfully ignorant of what I'm doing. When I'm making up riffs I just go for the sound of it. If I played it on piano I'd go, "Oh, it's E minor 6," I'd analyse it and it would hold no mystery. But because it's on the guitar and I'm not quite sure what I'm playing I'll go, "Oh, that sounds all right". I go with it, and more often than not it's pretty good.'

The new album contains his song *The Real Deal*, but Raymond hasn't always had due credit for his writing. 'I had a bum publishing deal from the Savoy Brown era I couldn't get out of, and the manager said "Well, in order that you get your money, we'll put the songs in Pete [Way] and Phil [Mogg]'s names". It got a bit ugly after 25 years when I said I wanted the songs back, and they had to pay me back all the money as well. But we're all friends now, it's all been glossed over. Michael instigated that when he was reforming the band in 1998. He said, "Do you want to be on board?" I said "Yeah, but I want my publishing sorted out", and he said "Yes, of course". So he made a stand on it.'

While Vinnie Moore supplies music for singer Phil Mogg to add lyrics, Raymond's songs are fully formed – but only three times in 38 years have they remained intact. 'Usually he likes to put his own stamp on it. There's one on the last album called *Fight Night*, that's his take on it, while in my live set [with solo group the Paul Raymond Project] it's called *Still The Same*. Not that one is better than the other, but I'm obviously going to go with the one I did.'

Paul is a Vintage endorsee, and plays a Paradise model. His ideal rhythm guitar sound is the one popularised by AC/DC dynamo Malcolm Young – 'really raunchy, powerful and edgy' – so he's been experimenting with a pickup wound for him by Jonathan Law of Feline Guitars. When it comes to amps Paul is a traditionalist, favouring a 100W Marshall amp and a battle-scarred pair of 4x12"s. Although he's had dalliances with boutique amps in the past, their all-singing, all-dancing nature never really suited him. 'They're a little bit over-complicated for my taste... you can't beat the sound of Marshalls.'

Asked to describe his guitar partners in UFO over the years in a sentence or two, Paul calls Schenker (whom he later joined in MSG) 'innovative and dedicated to practising'. Past interviews suggest he was never as keen on Schenker's replacement, Paul Chapman. 'I would say he was not so dedicated,' he laughs, 'but Paul was certainly original. I always recognised his playing.' And the current incumbent? 'Vinnie's very technical – almost like a jazz player. He said he doesn't know about jazz but at times he sounds almost like John Coltrane! Really fantastic technique.'

What of UFO's future? 'You're asking the wrong guy – you should be asking Phil Mogg. Basically it's Phil's band. We're all players within it, but Phil's been there since the beginning. Actually Andy [Parker, drums] has been there since the beginning, too, but he takes time out from time to time – ten or 11 years out!'

And another thing...

Names to have filled UFO's lead guitar chair over the years have included Whitesnaker-to-be Bernie Marsden, Pink Fairy Larry Wallis and Europe's John Norum

FRIENDS REUNITED?

Paul Raymond made the call that brought original drummer Andy Parker back to the ranks from his family business in the mid-2000s. So could legendary bad-boy bassist Pete Way ever return? Raymond is not ruling it – or, indeed, a sentimental Schenker reunion – completely out.

'It would be nice to keep the door open. I know Pete's had a lot of ill health and has had to slow down on his drinking, so if he's getting back into shape there's always an opportunity. And Michael is doing very well; he hasn't been drinking or anything. There could be something like that. We've probably got some anniversaries coming up...'

Vinnie Moore 'absolutely misses' Way, who's just survived a brush with prostate cancer. 'He's a funny guy. You're either laughing with him or at him, it doesn't matter – you're always laughing.' When told legendary hellraiser Way had once advised this writer 'not to let Vinnie have more than one glass of wine', the American laughed uproariously. 'I definitely can't hang with him, that's for sure – he's a pro!'

Photo: Steve Brinkman
Michael Schenker

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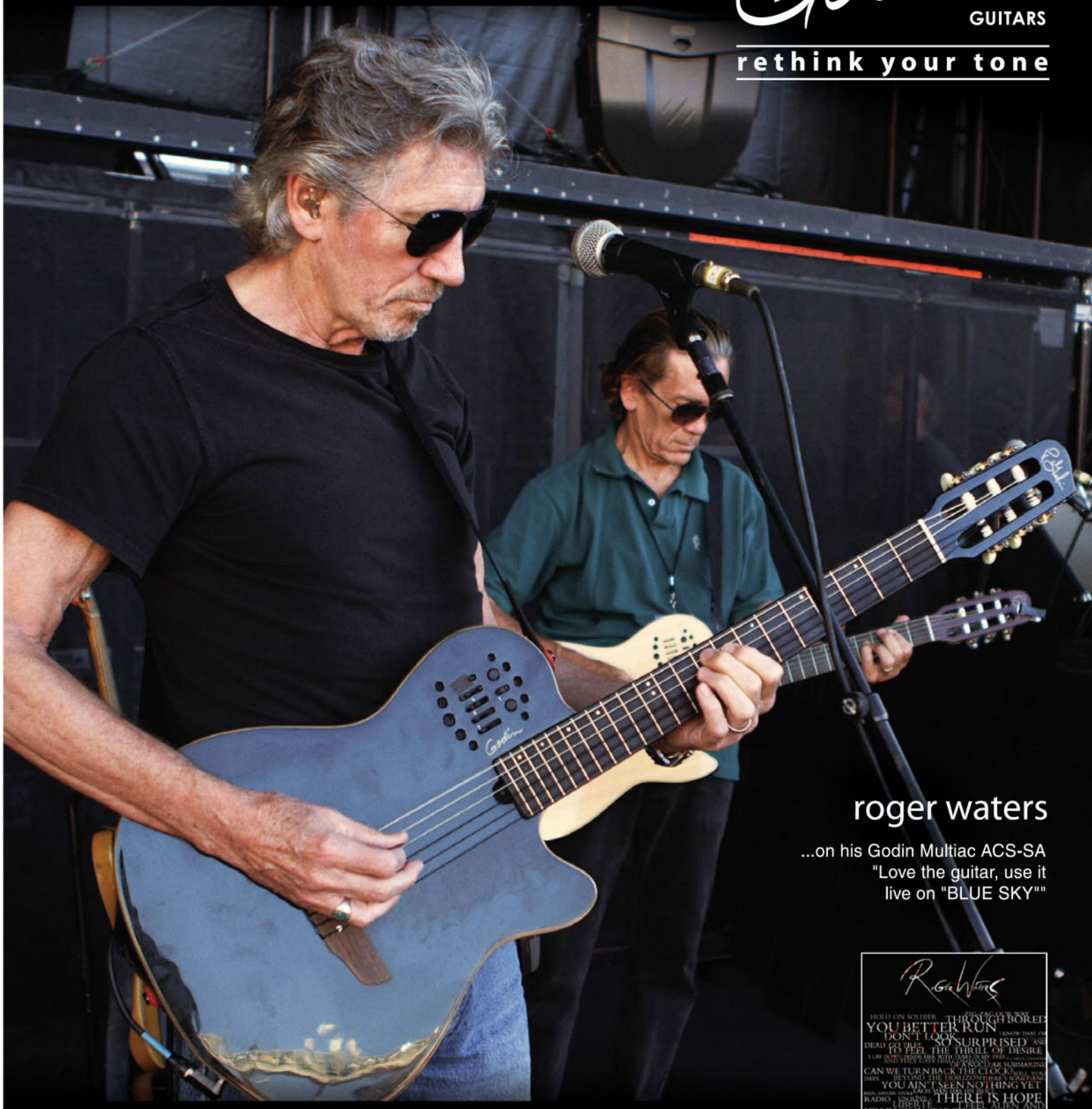

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Photo: Mike Prior

First Bass

Nathan East, the first-call sessionman with over 2000 recordings under his belt, has found space to deliver the solo album he's always wanted. Interview by **Evan Thomas**

In just a couple of hours of idly slobbing-out on the sofa watching music channels, you're likely to get pretty well acquainted with the playing of Nathan East. That's him, smile broadly etched across his face, in Eric Clapton's band. Or you might catch him as a 16 year-old, pouring a rich, funky-soul groove over early Barry White material, or weaving a wicked bluesy web on Kenny Loggins' rock'n'roll homage, *Footloose*. Michael Jackson's *Bad*? That's East. *Easy Lover* by Phil Collins and Philip Bailey? East again. Plus, he even co-wrote that one.

In 1991 East co-founded the soul/jazz 'supergroup' Fourplay with keyboardist Bob James, ex-Headhunters drummer Harvey Mason and Larry Carlton on guitar (initially replaced by Lee Ritenour and subsequently Chuck Loeb). 'Fourplay is a great outlet,' says East. 'To be in a band with a bunch of virtuosos and get to really highlight that aspect of your playing – you've got the best of all worlds.'

When Fourplay released their 12th studio album in 2012, East was the only member never to have recorded an album as leader – a situation he rectified in 2014 with the release of his self-titled solo debut. It's an eclectic, radio-friendly mix of songs including covers of Stevie Wonder's *Sir Duke*, Van Morrison's *Moondance* (with a stupendous vocal by ex-Doobie Brothers frontman Michael McDonald), plus a sprinkling of East originals. It's been well-received, both critically and commercially, and heralded as 'substance over flash', something that East readily accepts.

'I appreciate the critique. I set out to make a record which wasn't just about demonstrating virtuosity. The guys that really do it amazingly well, like Victor Wooten and Marcus [Miller]... I'd never jump into the ring with those guys in terms of trying to slap or pop. I like to service the song – that's the number one priority. We tried to have a collection of songs, so there is a balance on there. Even the bit of soloing I did, they had to talk me into it!'

Born Nathan Harrell East on 8 December, 1955, in Philadelphia, USA, his first instrumental foray was sibling-influenced. 'My older brother was playing guitar and so I picked it up, tagging along, but I couldn't get my fingers to make the shapes fast enough. Around the same time, there was a bass in the church, just sitting there on a stand. I hadn't really seen a bass and wasn't figuring on playing ➔

Gear

Basses
Yamaha Nathan East Signature BBNE2 five-string bass, Yamaha TRB6P six-string bass, SLB200 Silent Bass

Amps & FX
TC Electronic RH750 amplifier, RS cabinets and effects pedals

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East takes it to the streets in Brighton after his clinic at GAK, 2014

Photo: Mike Prior

it, and I asked 'Whose is this?' and nobody knew. I picked it up, plugged it in and I was thinking 'This is way easier than guitar!' You just yank on these notes and it makes this sound, then you add that to the band, and it's cool! It was a lucky find.'

His first serious instrument was actually cello – 'the upright bass was too big and the viola was too small, so my inspiration for picking up the cello was size!' – but his first bass was a Japanese one bought from a pawnshop. That got him started, and soon his mother took him to Manny's Music Store in New York and they bought a proper Fender Jazz Bass. The timing was good, as a new breed of virtuoso fusion bass players were beginning to emerge from the USA's burgeoning soul/funk scene of the early '70s.

'In those days it seemed like more bands were prevalent... Earth, Wind & Fire, Tower Of Power, Kool & The Gang. Those were the bands that were hot, and every one of those guys had bass players that were just blowin' you away. Chicago, Blood, Sweat & Tears, obviously Graham Central Station and Larry Graham, then Jaco busted on the scene... it was a pretty progressive time for bass.'

East found he'd stumbled on a career path, albeit one with initially limited ambitions. 'I was realising that you could work, on a local level, if you jumped around and you could keep a gig. My brain was putting together an equation: groove + simple = pay,' he grins. 'My priorities to this day are servicing the song. If you approach bass with a selfless attitude, everybody else appreciates it. I studied economy in notes – and all that stuff translates to economy in the bank account!' Unsurprisingly, he's a big fan of Welsh groove genius Pino Palladino; 'He maximises creativity, economy and taste. Consequently, he's able to work and play in all kinds of situations.'

East's learning soon changed from playing by ear in assorted bands to studying music formally, attaining a degree in music from UC San Diego. 'I had a couple of good teachers there, especially for upright. It was nice to get a formal education, but my real education was in the clubs.

'I went through the school of James Jamerson, Verdine White, Rocco [Prestia], Ron Carter. These guys, to this day when I see them, I feel like I should break off about 10 per cent of what I make, because I'm still using what I learnt from them!

'Today, I never take for granted any opportunity to show up and give clinics and masterclasses, because when I was in school, if someone was able to come visit that was doing what we wanted to do, then it was such a valuable experience for us. I know the guys I'm talking to are young, full of energy, with no other responsibilities, and they're in the woodshed practising at a ferocious level. What I try to impart to them is that you have to be able to transfer the genius that allows you to do that into value.'

His college education meant that East attained an excellent grasp of complex harmony, fuelled by a naturally inquiring mind and the motivation to think beyond the bass guitar. 'I was always hungry to listen to music, so I would listen to albums by not only bass players, but also by guitar players like Wes Montgomery and George Benson,' he points out. 'I was very always very appreciative of the way these guys get around changes. So you can learn a Benson or Montgomery solo, and you pretty much have an encyclopaedia.'

His career proper started in 1971 when he was hired to play in singer Barry White's band. 'We were lucky... one of the local bands I was in San Diego, called Power, was asked to stand in for the Stax Revue. All the Stax artists that were playing came down and they did a thing at the sports arena, and we were the house band. Barry White was one of the artists and when he heard us, he just hired the entire band on the spot, which was very cool. As a result of that, I got called to play on his records. It was definitely a good start!'

'My priority is servicing the song. You need to approach bass with a selfless attitude'

Although not a fan of queuing up for formal auditions, East is quick to point out that every time you play, you're auditioning for something. 'Even now, whenever I'm in the studio, I'm auditioning for the call back. If I do my job properly, then the next ➔

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East with faithful Yamaha TRB6P

Photo: Mike Prior

Listen up

NATHAN EAST
Nathan East
(2014)
Eclectic solo selection featuring guest slots by Michael McDonald, Stevie Wonder, Eric Clapton, Chuck Loeb and Ray Parker Jr

DAFT PUNK
Random Access Memories
(2014)
Super-smash – Nile Rodgers-fuelled set of retro barnstormers

time they go into record, I get the call.' Of gigs he has actually tried out for in advance, East's is a tale of some woe. 'I haven't had really good luck with auditions! Early on I auditioned for the Crusaders and I thought I'd nailed it, but I failed miserably and it just broke my heart. I remember auditioning for [keyboardist] Neil Larsen and [guitarist] Buzzy Feiten and I thought I'd nailed that as well but, nope, didn't get it. That was early on in my career and I thought, you know what? I don't think auditioning is for me.'

Still, after Barry White, the work poured in. Amongst the vast roll-call of artist East has worked with, his favourites include keyboardist Herbie Hancock ('it doesn't get much better than that... it's like playing with a genius'), Eric Clapton, Phil Collins, and singer Al Jarreau, whose *Live In London* set East fondly recalls as one of the most fun gigs he's ever had.

He also remembers his time working with saxophonist Wayne Shorter as being particularly challenging: 'The lines didn't lay under your fingers. It really took a lot of work! The way his brain works, things kinda get reorganised in terms of the fretboard positions, so it really took a lot of work to get the fingers to coincide with his amazingly genius writing. A huge challenge and a lot of fun.'

> *Even now, whenever I'm in the studio, I'm auditioning for the call back'*

Most recently East played on the Daft Punk/Nile Rodgers smash hit *Get Lucky*, and you can hear that he and drummer JR Robinson ('my musical wife') are having the time of their lives, laying down a live rhythm track. East's stabbing funk groove is notable for the use of the open B ('I get a big kick from that!') and a plethora of classy fills.

It also raised his profile just in time for the release of his solo first album – and that project's journey to inception was not a short one. 'I've been getting nudged by my bandmates in Fourplay for decades, literally. Chuck Loeb and I sat down in Montreux a couple of years ago and he said 'Look, you're not getting any younger, let's make a list of who you'd have play on it, what songs you'd do,' and we wrote down a list.'

East has been a long-time endorser of Yamaha basses, and it took the intervention of Yamaha Entertainment Group founder and Vice-President Chris Gero to kick the project into life. 'When he started the Yamaha Entertainment Group label, he came to me with an offer. Chris put a contract in front of me and had a pretty solid game-plan so we were able to get it done last year, which was a bit of a milestone.'

Whilst East had been composing for a long time, it didn't mean he had a ready cache of suitable material in waiting. 'All the songs that I was writing for my record, as soon as Fourplay's time to go in to the studio would come up, I would just pass on the songs that I was saving for my album,' he laughs. 'That just kept happening. And then you're working so much that you don't have enough time just to go and write every day.' The project took about a year in all, and East acknowledges the differences in responsibility between going in to do a bass session and running the whole project. 'It's a huge undertaking. Your brain is now aware that the buck starts and stops here.'

On release, the album hit the peak of *Billboard*'s jazz charts, and two singles, *Daft Funk* and *101 Eastbound*, have also done well. East is understandably proud. 'All things considered, the album's come out great and we've also been able to do a follow-up. I'm halfway through the second one, because we over-recorded. I'm feeling really good about the way it's been received all over the world – in Japan it sold out of the initial order in the first day, USA has been going well, and so we couldn't be happier. After all these years, a first!'

A tour to promote the album is planned for early 2015 with a band featuring as many of the contributors to the album as possible, with the exception of drummer Ricky Lawson who passed away in December 2013 from a brain aneurism aged 59. 'I'm gonna deeply miss him,' admits East, 'but he's played all over the record, so his spirit is kept alive.'

Meanwhile, it's back to the same hectic schedule East has maintained for over 30 years and which, at 59, he shows no inclination of reining in. Certainly, much of East's successful career can be attributed to the fact that he always presents himself as a servant to the client's music, but there's another thing too... he's also a damn fine bass player.

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D'ANGELICO
EX-59 & EX-175

If you're looking for some real jazz-age glitz and glamour then these handsome D'Angelico archtop electrics will teleport you back in time. Review by **Huw Price**

There's no denying that D'Angelico guitars make a strong visual impact, and there are plenty that will fall in love with them on looks alone. These instruments can trace their origins back to the New York workshop of John D'Angelico during the Jazz Age, and although the brand's new owners have moved production to Korea, art deco styling still abounds, with a brushed metal 'skyscraper' truss rod cover and classic 'stepped' motifs on the tailpieces, the pickguards and the Grover Super Rotomatic tuner buttons.

The EX-59 is a tribute to the 'Electric' model which had a body made by Code/United

Ornate headstock shape follows the original design

EX-59

The EX-59 is fitted with two P90s, and the body is made from flame maple laminate with five-ply binding on the top and three-ply on the back, plus bound f-holes. The finish is vivid, graduating from a yellow amber centre to a darker edge that's on the orange side of cherry. In classic jazzbox style the neck has a sandwich construction, with two sections of hard maple and a centre strip of walnut. Despite the sizeable body, the neck profile feels fairly slim and fast.

Some artifice occurs at the headstock with a faux 'stinger' that is actually painted rather than a strengthening veneer. In jazz circles the D'Angelico headstock shape is as iconic as anything Fender or Gibson ever dreamt up, and although the classy pearl inlay appears to be some sort of plastic overlay, it looks great. However, the headstock

The D'Angelico EX-59 has two P90s, a laminated maple body, and a maple/walnut neck which feels slim and fast

is so thin and the nut so thick that the back edge of the nut makes no contact with the front surface of the headstock; the truss rod cover appears to be holding it in position. It's the same situation on both guitars, and this poor nut installation is at odds with the otherwise precise detailing.

Real pearl is used for the block inlays along the bound fingerboard, which is rosewood to match the carved bridge. All the hardware is gold-plated and matched with cream plastic parts, aside from the black chickenhead pickup selector. Unfortunately, the knobs, pickup covers and surrounds don't have the same 'high end' look about them, which is a shame considering that this otherwise impressively-built model retails for over £1000. We were also disappointed to see that the thickness of the bridge pickup surround is not tapered to compensate for the arch in the top, and consequently the pickup leans towards the bridge at an angle.

Even if you're used to playing acoustics or hollowbody Gretsches, you might find the EX-59 a bit of an armful. The big, heavy headstock, combined with a full 17" wide, 3" deep body ↦

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FACTFILE
D'ANGELICO EX-59

DESCRIPTION
Archtop electric guitar. Made in Korea
PRICE **£1199**

BUILD **Laminated flame maple body with three-piece maple and walnut neck, 22-fret rosewood fingerboard, rosewood bridge, diecast Grover Super Rotomatic tuners**
ELECTRICS **Two P90s**
CONTROLS **Three-way rotary pickup selector with master volume and tone**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Sunburst, grey trans black, natural, solid black**

SCALE LENGTH
648mm/25.5"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43mm
12th fret 53mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21mm
Ninth fret 23mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 35.5mm
Bridge 55mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2.5mm
12th fret bass 3mm
WEIGHT **3.55kg/7.8lbs**

CONTACT **Marshall Distribution UK**
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Like this? Try this...

Guild
X-175 Manhattan
Hollowbody archtop with laminated spruce top, maple body, mahogany neck, rosewood fretboard, two Guild P90-style pickups, harp tailpiece, Grover Sta-Tite tuners, antique burst finish
RRP **£667**

Peerless
Gigmaster SC
Cutaway archtop with laminated maple top, back and sides, mahogany neck, rosewood fretboard, two P90s, Bigsby B70 vibrato. Comes in a metallic gold high gloss finish
RRP **£1032**

The originals had Franz single-coils but these are P90s

A tapered surround would make the pickup sit more nicely

The EX-59's sensitive, articulate pickups gives a range of fine hollowbody tones that cover old-school jazz and beyond

means the EX-59 takes some getting used to on the strap, but played sitting down it's fine. Our guitar arrived with an action that was higher than necessary to ensure buzz-free fretting, with little scope left for downwards adjustment, but lowering the bridge a touch did improve the playability.

Sounds

The EX-59's acoustic response is so loud and lively that quite some time may elapse before you feel inclined to plug it in. As you might expect from a maple bodied guitar (laminated or otherwise), the tone is bright and fairly percussive. String-to-string balance is good too, and the ample sustain makes unamplified soloing just as pleasurable as comping out chords. For reference we compared the EX-59 with a fully hollow Gibson ES-330 in order to gauge the tone of the D'Angelico's P90-style pickups. Although the acoustic tone of the body obviously plays a part, we found the D'Angelico versions somewhat brighter and clearer, although perhaps not quite as smooth and sweet.

Ornate stairstep tailpiece and cream radio-style knobs

The rotary pickup selector switch isn't designed with ultra-fast changes in mind, but don't ignore it as all three settings have much to offer. The neck position is free from bass boominess and stays clear and controlled across all the strings. This is where single notes sound their fullest and roundest, and the tone is well suited to blues and jazz – particularly when the tone control is backed off slightly. In contrast, the bridge pickup provides a solid thump in the bottom end, laced with a surprising degree of twang.

For us the standout pickup setting is the middle position, for this is where the EX-59 acquires a hint of phasey hollowness with a particularly interesting harmonic chime on top. Try some Travis picking, and you'll find you can pull off a fairly decent impersonation of a DeArmond-equipped Gretsch hollowbody or even Scotty Moore's Gibson ES-295 (the other thing worth mentioning is that an even more mellow sound can be achieved by lowering the pickups). This guitar has a range of fine hollowbody tones that cover old-school jazz and beyond. The pickups are very sensitive and articulate, so you can alter the attack and overall timbre by using various gauges of plectrum – on balance, we preferred the way the EX-59 responded with thick jazz-style picks.

EX-175

Although it's a new design, the EX-175 retains many of the characteristic D'Angelico features and one look at the headstock will leave you in no doubt about this guitar's origins. Then there's the stepped pickguard with its multi-layer binding, and a set of art deco-inspired control knobs that wouldn't look out of place on a Bakelite radio.

Even so, the EX-175 is something of an enigma. The '175' model designation was almost certainly co-opted for a purpose, but there's no Florentine cutaway... in fact the body shape most closely resembles the models Yamaha started producing for artists like George Benson back in the 1980s.

Both the neck and bridge pickups are humbuckers, and they ohm out at 10.8K and 12K respectively. The neck pickup looks like a conventional PAF-style unit, as you might expect, but the bridge unit's two rows of height-adjustable polepieces are probably intended to make it resemble a Filter'Tron.

A Bigsby is supplied, along with a roller bridge, but there are some issues here. Only the front end of the unit is intended to make contact with the body – albeit via the cushioning effects of two felt discs. On the EX-175 the bass side is floating above the body so the whole assembly twists on its hinge whenever it is being used. We placed a wedge underneath to stabilise the unit, which made a noticeable improvement to the Bigsby's responsiveness.

The EX-175 has a fully hollow body with a 15.5" wide lower bout and a depth of 2.75", with no Gretsch-style trestle bracing nor even a soundpost to hold the structure together more rigidly. The top is formed from laminated spruce, with a flame maple laminate ➔

FINAL SCORE

D'ANGELICO EX-59	
Build Quality	**15**/20
Playability	**16**/20
Sound	**16**/20
Value for money	**16**/20
Vibe	**19**/20
TOTAL	**82%**

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FACTFILE
D'ANGELICO EX-175

DESCRIPTION
Archtop electric guitar. Made in Korea
PRICE **£1299**

BUILD **Laminated flame maple body with laminated spruce top, three-piece maple and walnut neck, 22-fret rosewood fingerboard, rosewood bridge, diecast Grover Super Rotomatic tuners**
ELECTRICS **Two humbuckers**
CONTROLS **Three-way pickup switch with volume and tone controls**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Cherry, natural, solid black**

SCALE LENGTH
648mm/25.5"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43mm
12th fret 53mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21mm
Ninth fret 23mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 35.5mm
Bridge 52mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2.5mm
12th fret bass 3mm
WEIGHT **3.35kg/7.37lbs**

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Godin
5th Avenue Uptown
Jazz-style electric archtop with wild cherry cutaway body, flame maple top, maple neck, ebony fret board, two Godin custom humbuckers, roller bridge, Bigsby tremolo, trans red gloss finish
RRP **£949**

Epiphone
Emperor II Joe Pass NT
A 16" archtop with two humbucking pickups, maple body, selected spruce top, three-piece maple neck, gold hardware, designed with the legendary Joe Pass
RRP **£389**

Finish options include trans cherry, natural and solid black

Grover Super Rotomatics add the right New York touch

for the back and sides. The front and back of the body have off-white seven-ply binding which contrasts well with the cherry finish. The materials, construction and decoration of the EX-175's neck are identical to the EX-59's; our example had a hint of flame in the maple, but this will vary from guitar to guitar. The EX-175 is also available with natural and black finish options.

Sounds

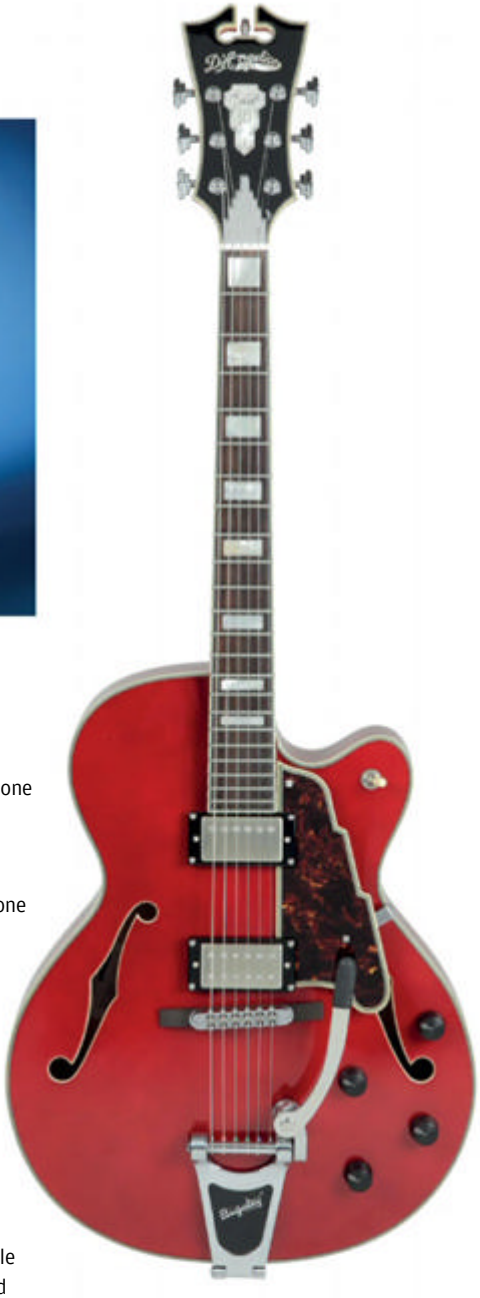
Compared acoustically to the EX-59, the EX-175 is noticeably less resonant and lively. It has quite a sweet and pleasant unplugged tone, but the reduced volume and brightness is indicative of a more solidly-braced instrument - which fits with D'Angelico's statement that the EX-175 is 'made for players seeking the new rock edge D'Angelico provides'.

The advantage of the sturdier build is that the EX-175 is slightly easier to handle because the transient response is a little more subdued. This, in combination with pickups that are smoother and less bright, makes for a guitar that requires a lot less amp tweaking to dial in a tone... although players who prefer edgier instruments with more distinct sonic character may find they prefer the EX-59.

The EX-175's pickups produce a strong tone but they do not have inappropriately high output. There's a pleasing degree of sonic contrast between the pickups too, with a conventional but very pleasing jazz tone from the neck and a bit of midrange honk from the bridge. Through an amp's clean channel you should be able to maintain an overdrive-free tone without needing to turn the EX-175's volume controls down.

Those looking for a big-bodied guitar for playing overdriven solos may find the EX-175 lacking in sustain and a little prone to feedback. Then again, there's no centre block, and its character is certainly commensurate with most fully hollow guitars. Another issue, which would be easier to remedy, is the slightly stiff playing feel. The scale length is a full Fender-style 25.5" and this, combined with the fairly robust set of strings supplied, didn't make for finger-friendly bends or vibrato.

Overall, however, the setup does demonstrate that the EX-175 has the potential to be whatever you want it to be. String it up with heavier gauge strings, or even flatwounds, lower the pickups and it would be a more than capable instrument for the jazz purist; set the pickups closer to the strings, put on a set of 10s and you could have a lot of fun playing rockabilly, rock or even fusion-style material.



Black and white binding surrounds the body, fingerboard and pickguard

Verdict

Although both guitars are solidly made and well-finished, there were some causes for concern with the nuts and the Bigsby installation. Even so, these are fine-sounding guitars that offer different takes on the jazz formula. With a little more attention paid to detail, they would be very hard to fault.

FINAL SCORE

D'ANGELICO EX-175	
Build Quality	**15**/20
Playability	**16**/20
Sound	**16**/20
Value for money	**15**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**80%**

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MICHAEL KELLY
Deuce Classica

2015 is shaping up as a good year for high-quality low-price semi-acoustics. **Marcus Leadley** checks out the latest instrument from Michael Kelly...

Michael Kelly started out making acoustic basses and mandolins about 10 years ago. However, since becoming part of the same Hanser Music Group as BC Rich, we've seen rock instruments join the brand's roster. The Deuce Classica seems more in step with the earlier acoustic tradition; it's a fine looking semi-acoustic with a vintage feel, and the tiger eye flame maple finish, imitation wood scratchplate and inlaid headstock design gives the guitar a definite jazz aura.

The body is made from maple laminates and features a solid maple centre block, which aligns it with the design of Gibson's 335; the block is a solution Gibson came up with in the late 1950s as a way of controlling the feedback issues more traditional thinline models were experiencing in the louder, higher-gain rock and pop environments. It effectively divides the body chamber in two, which cuts down resonance. At the same time, the basic semi-acoustic character is maintained.

The Deuce Classica feels like a very classy instrument. It's got a good, rich acoustic voice and the bound rosewood fingerboard has an easy-playing character, helped by a good fret job and a nicely in-tune set up. The double teardrop inlays are an original touch, without being overly fancy; however, there are some minor issues with routing and alignment, and some filler appears to have been used. None of this effects the instrument's performance.

Maple neck with gold-plated Grover tuners

Laminated body is flamed maple back and front

The Deuce Classica is a fine-looking semi with an imitation wood scratchplate and inlaid headstock which give it a jazz aura

The 24.75" scale length is immediately familiar to the hand and it's hard not to feel at home on this territory. The general standard of finishing is very good and the maple set neck offers a rounded full '60s profile without being overly chunky. The neck is made from maple, not mahogany as one would expect with a Gibson, but this does not seem to have a marked effect on the overall tone of the instrument; maybe it's a tad brighter.

I'm not a huge fan of Grover tuners as they always feel a little rubbery and vague to me, but these are the real McCoy and there is no question they are quality hardware and they do the job required of them. All the hardware – tunomatic bridge, stop tail piece, screws and pickguard mount – are gold-plated. This suits the look of the instrument, but some may be a little concerned when it comes to the longevity of the plating. However, this is only really an issue if you're likely to use the guitar regularly for hot and sweaty gigs.

In terms of its electrics the Deuce Classica offers a suitably conservative feature set: a pair of PAF-Plus humbuckers, independent tone ➔➔

FACTFILE
MICHAEL KELLY DEUCE CLASSICA

DESCRIPTION
Semi-acoustic electric guitar. Made in China
PRICE **£459; price does not include hard case**

BUILD **Semi-hollow body constructed from maple laminates with solid maple centre block. Maple set neck with 22-fret rosewood fingerboard. Tunomatic-style bridge with stop tailpiece. Grover tuners**
ELECTRICS **Two Paul Kelly PAF-Plus pickups, independent volume and tone controls and three-way pickup selector**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Tiger eye flame maple in sunburst (there is also a lower-cost Solitaire model with a plain top in satin cherry to consider)**

SCALE LENGTH
628mm/24.75"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43.5mm
12th fret 53.3mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21.8mm
12th fret 24mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 35mm
Bridge 52.5mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 1.8mm
12th fret bass 2.2mm
WEIGHT **3.52kg/7.75lbs**

CONTACT **Rosetti**
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Epiphone
Dot
Another classic semi-acoustic based on the Gibson 335. Laminated maple with a centre block, plus humbucking pickups and a three-way selector.
RRP **£299**

Hagstrom
Viking
Beautifully finished and great sounding 335-style guitar with humbuckers
RRP **£775**

Gibson
ES-335
It's the real McCoy with a price tag to match. Humbucking pickups, of course, plus sunburst or classic cherry finish
RRP **£2090**

Bound fingerboard, plus position markers that echo a Gibson Trini Lopez

Ornate headstock facing with exotic wood inlay

The Deuce Classica is a well-made, flexible and extremely tuneful electric guitar, and the pickups are a real winner

and volume controls and a three-way selector, which is mounted on the upper forward bout not with the rest of the controls. Designating a humbucker as a PAF-style unit is a cheeky reference to the Gibson humbucker introduced as an alternative to the single coil P90 in the in 1950s. Used in this context, the name is telling us we should expect mellow vintage tones and classic blues and rock voices rather than high-gain contemporary characteristics.

Sounds

One of the things about a thinline semi-acoustic is that you can't really cut corners that much when it comes to materials and manufacturing. It's pretty much impossible to build a semi below a certain price point, and falling prices generally reflect the cost savings associated with Chinese manufacturing. Many of the most traditional, expensive instruments are still made from laminates so there is no intrinsic reason why a budget model, if you get all the other factors right, shouldn't sound really very good.

This Classica proves the point. The pickups are really well-voiced; even some name brand units can fail to deliver a good clean chord sound in the bridge position, but these are spanky and bright without any midrange muddle. Indeed, there's a really pleasing pick-edge click to the tone that's ideal for funk rhythm work. First position chords sound open and full, and melody playing is a pleasure – all the more so because the bass frequencies are well articulated. This makes fingerpicking for ragtime or blues extremely effective. Adding a hint of drive delivers a sound that's idea for vintage John Lee Hooker, or you can ramp things up a bit for classic BB King. Switching to a Marshall and flicking around the pickup selector brings on many classic post –'68 era Cream guitar sounds, and moving between the three pickup settings and tweaking the amp creates a huge array of different voices. Clean, edgy or buttery jazz tones are there in abundance, but push the gain beyond what seems sensible and you're into Alvin Lee or Dave Grohl territory, and you have to get pretty loud to bring on the feedback. The guitar really starts to come alive at this point.

Verdict

This is a well made, flexible and extremely tuneful electric guitar. The pickups are a real winner and there is nothing about this instrument that makes you think it's a relatively budget model. The hardware is all of a good standard – the use of genuine Grover tuners in particular is an unexpected mark of quality – but the looks are an acquired taste, and some might want to change the scratchplate and truss rod cover for standard black plastic (or genuine wood). This guitar could work effectively for many different types of players, and both the first-time buyer and the seasoned veteran who fancies trying a semi for a change will be well served. The Classica would also make a very good slide guitar. There are significant discounts out there well below RRP that make this instrument a very appealing proposition.

Gold hardware looks posh but may show its age in time

Bookmatched herringbone binding running around the top

FINAL SCORE

MICHAEL KELLY DEUCE CLASSICA	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**19**/20
Vibe	**17**/20
TOTAL	**89%**

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Marshall
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MARSHALL
1962HW and 1958X Combos

Which would you choose: the mighty handwired Bluesbreaker combo or its 18W 2x10" cousin? Review by **Richard Purvis**

You can throw the word 'dinosaur' at all sorts of people: those who refuse to get a mobile phone, those who don't trust foreign food... or, perhaps, those who wish Marshall was still making amplifiers exactly as it did 50 years ago. But watch what you say, because if you ever get the chance to stand in front of an early plexi-panel Marshall singing its handwired heart out, there's a severe danger you'll suddenly come over all Jurassic yourself. These amps provided the pure, thunderous tones that shaped the sound of British rock, and for all their quirks they represent a kind of perfection. So why wouldn't the boffins in Bletchley try to recapture that moment with some authentic reissues?

There are now seven models in the Marshall Handwired Series, and these are two of the latest additions: a 'faithful recreation' of the 30W Series II 1962 combo, released in 1965 and hoisted into legendary status not long after by Eric Clapton's use of one on the John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers 'Beano' album; and a reissue of the 1958, a 2x10" 18-watter that first appeared in 1966. Yes, those date-like names are confusing, but we can't go back and change history now, can we?

The 1962HW's two channels have separate Volume controls but share the same EQ stack

The 30W Marshall 1962 was hoisted into legendary status by Eric Clapton on the Bluesbreakers' 'Beano' album

The nicknames are simpler, though: Bluesbreaker and mini-Bluesbreaker. Both amps are valve-rectified, and each has a footswitchable tremolo effect – valve-driven, of course – on one channel. The included footswitches are delightfully dinky wedges of grey-painted metal.

1962HW

Think of a giant fridge-freezer lying on its side. No, think of a garden shed. No, think of one of those massive sea containers that can just about fit on the back of an articulated lorry. The Marshall 1962HW, it turns out, is bigger than any of those things. In fact, it's bigger than all of them put together. It's bigger than WALES.

Well, it's pretty big anyway. This has to be one of the widest guitar combos ever made, at just over 32" – that's way wider than a Vox AC30 or a Fender Twin Reverb, and a good three inches more than the standard 1962 reissue. The reason is that this handwired version uses the KT66 output valves found in Clapton's mid-'60s original, rather than 5881s, and these monstrously fat tubes take up a lot of chassis space. ➔

FACTFILE
1962HW

DESCRIPTION **Two-channel 30W 2x12" valve combo, 4 x ECC83 and 2 x KT66, GZ34 rectifier. Made in the UK**
PRICE **£2549 including footswitch and cover**

TOP PANEL **On/off and Standby switches; Speed and Intensity for tremolo; Presence, Bass, Middle, Treble; Volume controls for Channels 1 and 2, with two inputs each**
BOTTOM PANEL **Mains voltage and output impedance selectors, speaker output, footswitch input for tremolo bypass (balanced jack)**
DIMENSIONS **81.5cm wide, 62.5cm high, 27cm deep**
WEIGHT **32.5kg/72lbs**

CONTACT **Marshall**
01908 375411
www.marshallamps.com

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Regal 45
British 2x12" combo, based on the Bluesbreaker circuit, was *G&B*'s best amp of 2012
RRP **£1895**

Friedman
Small Box combo
A 50W combo powered by a pair of 5881s from a darling of the US boutique scene
RRP **$2999**

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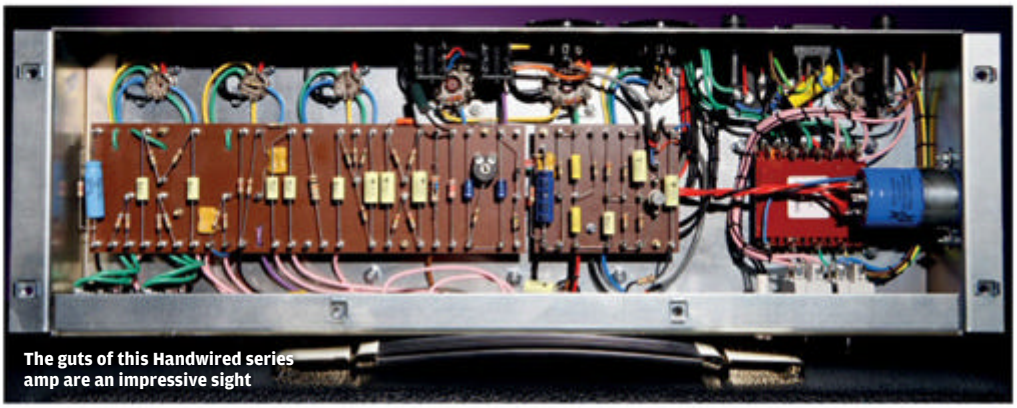
The guts of this Handwired series amp are an impressive sight

With the Volume around 5 we're getting crunchy as well as loud, and the vintage warmth begins to ooze like lava

The result is an amp that isn't so nippy around corners, but it isn't actually all that heavy, mainly because the timber is only 12mm thick. So there's plenty of space around the speakers, which are a modern rarity: English-made Celestion Greenbacks. They're labelled G12C, and like everything else about this amp – including the Drake transformers – they've been designed to get as close to the original specifications and sound as possible.

Six screws hold the amp snugly to the cabinet's side battens, but once you've managed to lift it clear you still have to undo as many bolts to remove the back panel. It's worth the effort for the view inside the chassis: the centrepiece is a large and imposingly thick brown turret board, which has been wired up with supreme neatness. Modern components have been used, naturally, but this is an amp that looks every bit as promising on the inside as it must do viewed across a dingy stage, balanced on a milk crate... or rather, two milk crates.

While it's warming up, let's have a quick look at the top panel. The two channels have independent Volume controls, but the three-way tonestack and Presence are shared; finally, we find Speed and Intensity knobs for the tremolo. There are two inputs per channel, and they're wired in phase, so we should be able to patch one into the other for high-gain high-jinks.

Sounds

Humbuckers at the ready, we'll set off on Channel 1 with all the tone controls at halfway and Volume around 2. Unsurprisingly, it sounds pretty hefty. There's a decent amount of clean headroom available – yes, some Marshall fans do like to play without overdrive, if only at funerals – and what you're likely to notice above all is the huge warmth of the bottom end. It can be slightly loose, but in a pleasing way, and it's matched by a shimmering top end that rings out boldly without harshness. So what's going on in the midrange? Not that much, actually – we often think of the classic British voice as being all snarly mids, but in truth there's little of that to be heard on the Beano album... and the 1962HW lines up extremely well against that template.

With Volume around 5 we're getting crunchy, as well as seriously loud, and the vintage warmth begins to ooze like lava. It's as touch-sensitive as it is tonally transparent, which serves as an irresistible invitation to go noodling up the neck with jazzy fluidity. On the second half of the Volume dial it's grinding rock and hairy blues all the way, with no misbehaviour in either bass or treble: this isn't an ultra-high-gain beast but it has a fantastic tone for thick, pure power chords, and the signal-to-noise ratio is impressive.

Channel 2 is a lot darker, and you can only do so much with the EQ controls, but there are a couple of other ways to brighten it up: by cranking the Presence, which is very sweetly voiced in a Vox Top Boost kind of way; or, less intuitively, by turning up the Volume on the *other* channel. We can happily report that the tremolo sounds every bit as rich and throbby as it should, with a conservative but well-judged speed range. Less happily, in the case of our review unit it's accompanied by some low-level rhythmic 'motorboating' noises. You probably wouldn't hear it under chords, but it's not the sort of glitch you expect at this price.

Patching one channel into the other is a handy way of adding thickness and gain, as well as certain amount of tonal versatility, but there's more fun to be had by using an A/B switch to hop from one to the other: as long as you can match the tones up reasonably well, this makes the 1962HW a nifty channel-switcher for live use.

1958X

Marshall's 1974 combo, a lightweight 18-watter with a single Greenback, ↔

FINAL SCORE

1962HW	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Versatility	**17**/20
Sound	**19**/20
Value for money	**15**/20
Vibe	**20**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

British-made Celestion G12C speakers with authentic solder tabs

A pair of whopping great KT66 output vales, plus a GZ34 rectifier

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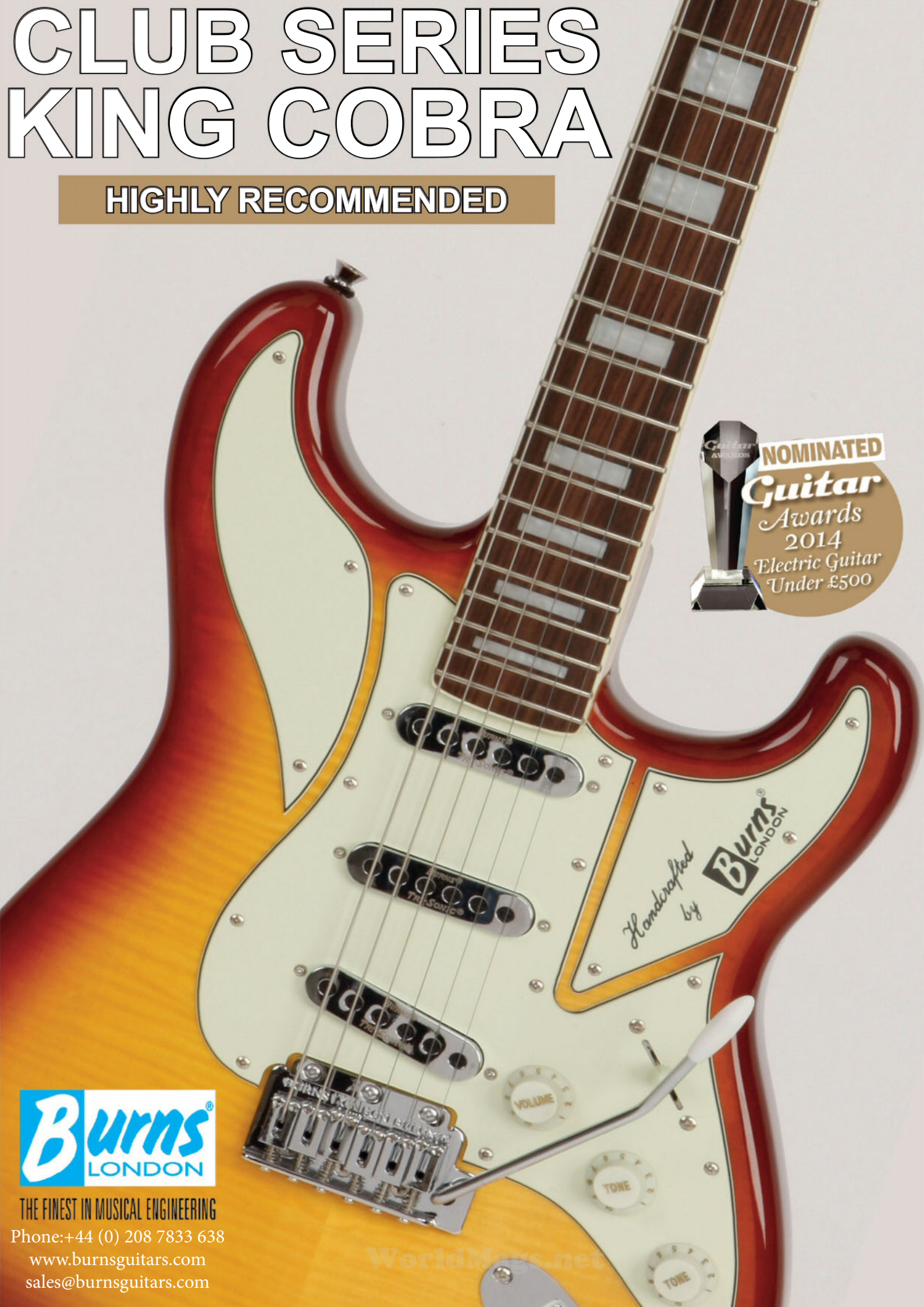

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FACTFILE
1958X

DESCRIPTION **Two-channel 18W 2x10" valve combo with 3 x ECC83 and 2 x EL84 valves plus EZ81 rectifier. Made in the UK**
PRICE **£1619 including footswitch**

TOP PANEL **On/off and Standby switches; Speed and Intensity for tremolo; Channel 1 Tone, Volume and two inputs, Channel 2 Tone, Volume and two inputs**
BOTTOM PANEL **Output impedance selector, two speaker outputs, footswitch input for tremolo bypass (unbalanced jack)**
DIMENSIONS **61cm wide, 53.5cm high, 23cm deep**
WEIGHT **19.5kg/43lbs**

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Marshall
1974X
For £50 less you can have the 1x12" version of the world's most famous 18W amplifier
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Cornell
Plexi 18/20 Combo
An excellent Marshall type with a pair of 10" speakers, also available as a 1x12" (for £1535)
RRP **£1580**

JPF
Regent 25
Sitting somewhere between our two Marshalls, this 2x10" combo uses KT66s to blast out 25W; add £200 for alnico speakers
RRP **£1175**

The 1958X has a simple control layout of Volume and Tone for each channel

The 1958X gets 18W from two EL84 valves and runs one less preamp tube than the 1962HW

The 1958X pleads to be pushed, and if anything it's even more organic and responsive than the bigger amp

is something of a legend in its own right, and thanks to its simpler circuit it has probably been the starting point for more 'tributes' (and overt clones) than the Bluesbreaker itself. The 1974X reissue has been around for some years now, and despite some transformer issues on early samples it's a gem.

The 1958X version swaps the 12" speaker for a pair of 'aged' 15W Celestion G10FFs, which should give it just a touch more room-filling reach. This has been done without having to make the cabinet any wider, and next to the 1962HW it really does look like a baby elephant nuzzling its mum. This model doesn't have a negative feedback loop, so there's no Presence control and we can expect a more open, perhaps slightly more Vox-like sound.

Sounds

This time it's the tremolo channel that's brighter. There is some clean stuff available at low levels, but not a lot: the mini-Bluesbreaker is an amp that pleads to be pushed into overdrive. If anything it's even more organic and responsive than the bigger amp, with a 'sweet spot' that extends most of the way round the Volume dial: delicately plucked chords can be virtually dirt-free, but dig into single notes with some intent and they come out thick and buttery.

At full volume the 1958X is doing its very best to match the mighty tone of the 30-watter – there's less thump to the chest, and the cathode-biased EL84 output valves make it more fresh and fizzy, but this is nobody's runt.

There are no motorboating issues with the tremolo this time, and the effect is just as tasty as it is on the other amp. It's a deep pulse even with Intensity down to about 3, and when you set both controls to full it gets pretty extreme. If you're lucky enough to have an audience, and would like to keep them, you might want to go easy here.

We should just mention a couple more differences between the two amps: the 1958X's two channels are not wired in phase, so patching one into the other sounds flat rather than fat; and those cute footswitches are not interchangeable, as the 1962HW's has a balanced cable. We found this out by getting them mixed up and losing about 10 minutes wondering why the tremolo wasn't working. Whoops.

Verdict

Maybe people go on too much about the woody clonk of the 'British sound' – you can't get more British than these Buckinghamshire-built beauties, and yet they're both as sweetly transparent in the midrange as anything to come out of California. What they offer above all is two slightly different kinds of big, smooth, crunchy overdrive. Marshall will never be able to please all the cork-sniffers, or undercut the indie makers standing on its shoulders; but these are the real thing and, one tremolo niggle aside, they're nothing short of gorgeous.

FINAL SCORE	
MARSHALL 1958X	
Build Quality	**20**/20
Versatility	**17**/20
Sound	**19**/20
Value for money	**16**/20
Vibe	**20**/20
TOTAL	**92%**

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Dunlop

50

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TANGLEWOOD
TW130SMCE

This all-mahogany fingerpicker comes attractively decked out with a slotted head, a cutaway, simple decoration and a B-Band system with soundhole control. Review by **Huw Price**

In the world of steel-string acoustic guitars, slotted headstocks are about as old-school as it gets. They're a vestige of the European tradition of guitar making that pioneers of American guitar manufacturing such as CF Martin and the Larson brothers carried with them to the new world.

Slotheads are typically associated with smaller body sizes and necks that join at the 12th fret, but the Tanglewood TW130SMCE has an orchestra-size body with a 14th fret join and a cutaway for access all the way up to the 20th fret. Combining vintage and new features in this way can often result in guitars that look oddly out of proportion, but the TW130SMCE slots into Tanglewood's Premier Historic Series just fine.

The next most striking feature is that the TW130SMCE is all one colour – and that's because it's all one type of wood. To be strictly accurate rosewood has been used for the fingerboard, bridge and peghead overlay, but otherwise the overriding theme is mahogany of the African variety. The back is fairly plain, but better-looking timber has been used for the sides and the best stuff has been reserved for the top. The sides are laminated but the top and back are solid, and that's easy enough to determine thanks to the absence of binding. In fact the only decorative flourish on the whole body is the herringbone rosette. Even the body finish is satin of the open-pore variety, but the austere vibe suits the updated depression era aesthetic just fine. Unlike the body, the neck has a smooth satin feel and grain filler was clearly used before the finish was applied.

Handsome all mahogany build and no body binding

Slotted headstock is an attractive touch

Slotheads are associated with smaller 12-fret guitars but this Tanglewood has a 14th-fret neck join and a cutaway

The rounded headstock slots and the open-gear butterbean tuners provide an interesting counterpoint to the contemporary B-Band Crescent pickup system. At a first glance you may even miss the stealthy little control unit, because the controls are tucked away inside the soundhole; just curl your fingers around the edge to adjust volume, treble and bass. There's also a phase switch and a battery status light. A sealable battery pouch is attached ➧➧

FACTFILE
Tanglewood TW130SMCE

DESCRIPTION **Cutaway orchestra-size electro acoustic. Made in China**
PRICE **£369.95**

BUILD **Solid mahogany top and back with laminated mahogany back and sides, mahogany neck, rosewood fingerboard and bridge, herringbone rosette, open gear tuners, B-Band Crescent pickup system**
LEFT-HANDERS **Yes**
FINISH **Open pore satin body, smooth satin neck**

SCALE LENGTH
650mm/25.6"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43mm
12th fret 53mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 20mm
Ninth fret 21mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 37mm
Bridge 55mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2mm
12th fret bass 3.5mm
WEIGHT **1.8kg/3.96lbs**

CONTACT **Tanglewood**
0113 2872991
www.tanglewoodguitars.co.uk

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Legacy Series
Neat-looking solid hog-top cutaway guitar with a solid mahogany top, mahogany back and sides, rosewood fingerboard, dot inlays, black body and neck bindings, abalone rosette, scalloped X-bracing, rosewood bridge, bone nut and saddle, Fishman Isys+ pickup system with tuner and natural satin finish
RRP **£242**

Hudson
OMSM
A satin-finished non-cutaway Orchestra Model electro acoustic with a solid mahogany top and solid mahogany back and sides, rosewood bridge and fingerboard, B-Band A1-2N system with soundhole volume control
RRP **£325**

Fender
CD-140SCE
Cutaway electro-acoustic with solid mahogany top and laminated mahogany back and sides, mahogany neck, rosewood fingerboard, Fishman Presys pickup system with active onboard preamp, gloss urethane finish and chrome hardware
RRP **£273**

Nut width is 43mm, or a shade under 1.75"

B-Band Crescent preamp has phase, volume treble and bass

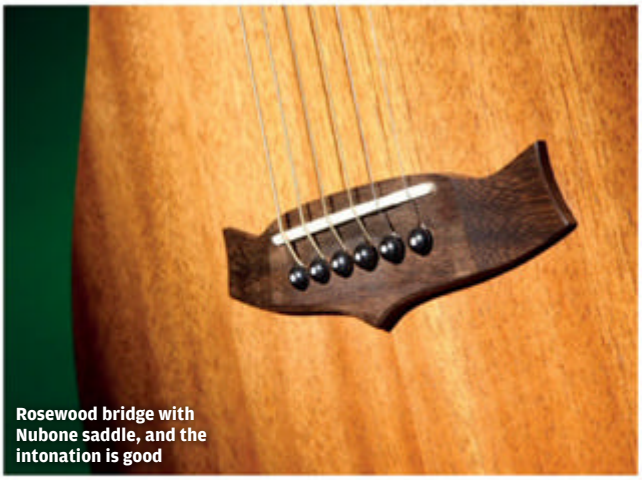
Coated 80/20 bronze strings are supplied as standard

The TW130SMCE has a characterful and enjoyable tone with brightness, complexity and a direct midrange

to the neck block, and the pickup itself is an undersaddle piezo.

Nubone is the material used for the nut and compensated saddle. In case you're wondering, Nubone is nether bone nor particularly new. It's a lightweight but extremely rigid product Graph Tech describe as a derivation of the more widely-known Tusq. It has been especially formulated, they say, to mimic the sonic qualities of traditional high quality bone while providing vastly superior consistency for large-scale instrument manufacturers.

Peering through the soundhole, it's evident that the TW130SMCE has been made with a lot of care. The braces are smooth, all the joins and tucks are neatly done, and there's no glue squeeze out to be seen. Our review example arrived with a medium-low action and there is plenty of scope for adjustment both upwards and downwards. Our only gripe would be the sharp edges of the nut, but a few minutes of careful filing or sanding would remedy that in no time.


Rosewood bridge with Nubone saddle, and the intonation is good

Sound

Guitar companies like Martin started making plain, no-frills all-mahogany acoustics during the Great Depression. How fitting, then, that mahogany guitars appear to be enjoying something of a revival during yet another calamitous economic downturn. Not all of these mahogany-topped guitars are affordable for cash-strapped musicians, but this Tanglewood certainly is.

The first thing we noticed was the way the whole body vibrates against your chest when the low strings are played. You can actually feel the wood moving, and whether you're assessing an acoustic or electric, this is always a sure sign that you have a live one in your hands. The TW130SMCE has a very characterful and enjoyable tone that's pretty far removed from the ubiquitous spruce sound. The bass is relatively deep and well-focused but the upper treble harmonics do not swamp the fundamental frequencies. This guitar certainly has enough brightness and complexity but it really expresses itself through the directness of its midrange.

While both lively and resonant, the TW130SMCE does have a slightly rough and clangy quality. This may not be to everybody's taste but we certainly like it and it lends itself very well to rootsy picking of the blues and country varieties. It makes for an effortlessly convincing bottleneck tone, too. Having said that, we feel that a set of phosphor bronze strings might help the TW130SMCE to produce an even richer, smoother and more complex tone than the factory-fitted 80/20 coated bronze strings. We'd be quite keen to try a set of round core strings too, simply to ramp the rootsiness up to the max.

The control layout is well thought-out. The phase switch is located dead centre, which gives you a reference point, then the volume control is to the right, and the treble and bass controls to the left. Once you get used to it, adjustments are quick and easy.

For such a lively instrument the TW130SMCE is remarkably feedback-resistant. Perhaps we're imagining things, but undersaddle piezos are either getting better or manufacturers have finally figured out that the onboard circuitry should filter out the harsher high frequency content for you. Either way, the TW130SMCE system's starting point is pretty good and you can use the controls for fine-tuning your tone rather than damage limitation.

Verdict

Guitars in this price range with a solid mahogany back as well as a solid mahogany top are hard to come by, and that extra bit of tone timber does make for a very engaging and enjoyable acoustic tone. When you factor in the cutaway and a very useable pickup system, what's not to like?

FINAL SCORE

TANGLEWOOD TW130SMCE	
Build Quality	**19**/20
Playability	**18**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Looks	**20**/20
TOTAL	**93%**

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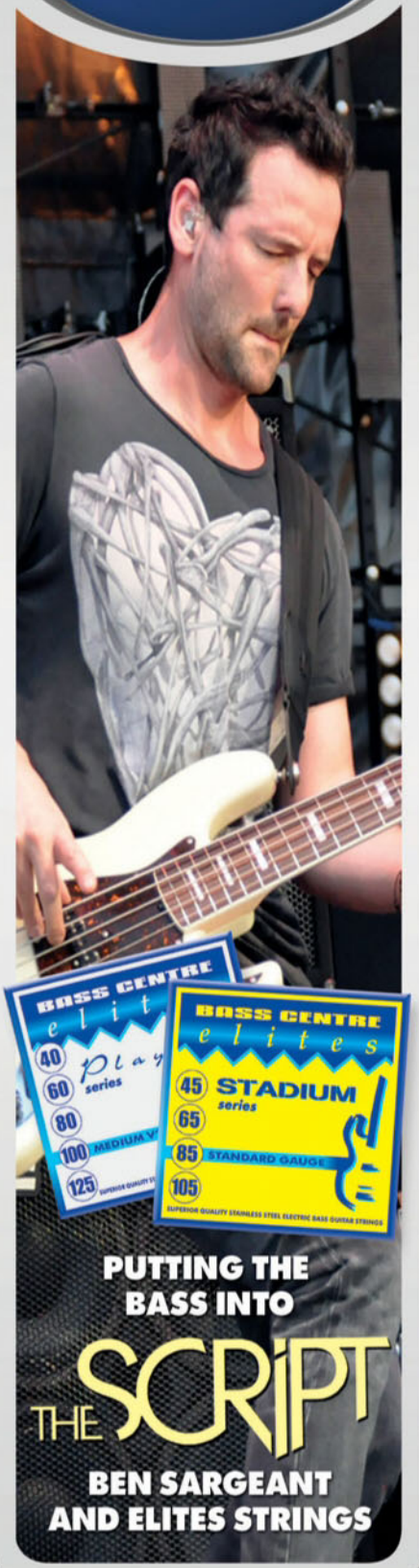

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AUDIO-TECHNICA

System 10 Stompbox

Audio-Technica's foray into the wireless world comes with fine quality built in and the ability to switch between two amps, or an amp and a tuner. Review by **Richard Purvis**

The best thing about guitar leads is the way they never get twisted, tangled, stood on, tripped over, mixed up or lost, and don't restrict your movement in any way. Oh, and the way they don't cause any signal degradation whatsoever, no matter how long they are. They're great, aren't they?

No, alright, they're a pest. So it's no wonder some people invest in a wireless guitar system – and no wonder a company like Audio-Technica, best known for its microphones and headphones, should want to get in on that market. But this isn't just an invisible cable: it's also an ABY switch, allowing you to hop between two amps (or between one and both, or between an amp and a tuner) without being wired up to either of them. Nice idea.

The System 10 Stompbox is a digital device but it's 24-bit and we are promised 'ultimate sound quality'. You'll still need two leads to go from the receiver to your amps/pedals, but you're all clear at the guitar end – with just a small transmitter clipped onto your strap or belt – and can crowdsurf freely until your worshippers' arms get tired. Sadly there isn't a second footswitch for choosing between 'A or B' and 'A and B' modes, just a little slider at the rear of the unit. The digital display allows you to select which transmitter to link up with – it can work with up to eight – but if you're using it with a single guitar you should never have to touch that stuff.

In use

With two amps on standby, we power up the receiver's 12v adapter, then plug the transmitter into a guitar and hold down the power switch for five seconds to turn it on. Almost instantly we have happy blue lights on both units, and when we switch on the amps we're cooking. Wow, who said this wireless business was complicated?

There's no obvious 'digitalness' in the sound – maybe just a bit more clarity and edge than going through two full-length cables. Audio-Technica claims an operating range of 60 feet in a clear environment with no interfering signals, and that doesn't seem unrealistic. Plugged into an amp in my loft studio, I strummed my way down two flights of stairs like an electrified wandering minstrel and could still hear it blasting away; it only started cutting out at the very furthest corner of the building.

The only real pity is that there's a slight delay between stomping and the actual switching. This is most noticeable in 'A or B' mode, where the little slice of silence as it jumps from one output to the other is quite jarring. Mid-song amp-hopping's probably out, then.

Verdict

It has obvious limitations, but the System 10 Stompbox will impress you with its simplicity as well as its sonic purity – especially if all you want it to do is mute your amp while you tune up. Been thinking about wireless? Maybe it's time to make the switch.

FINAL SCORE

SYSTEM 10 STOMPBOX	
Build Quality	**16**/20
Ease of use	**20**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**15**/20
Looks	**17**/20
TOTAL	**86%**

FACTFILE

System 10 Stompbox

SPECS **Digital wireless transmitter and receiver with ABY channel switching. Made in China**
RRP **£319**

CONTROLS **Transmitter: On/off/mute button, volume trimpot in battery compartment (2 x AA); Receiver: main footswitch, switch for either/both output mode, System ID and Pair buttons for using multiple transmitters, 12v input (adapter included)**

OPERATING FREQUENCY
02.4GHz

Dimensions
5.5" x 5.5" x 7"
Weight **2kg/4.5lbs**

CONTACT **Audio-Technica**
0113 277 1441
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Switchblade+
Already have a wireless system? You could always plug the receiver into this super-cheap passive ABY switch, and away you go
RRP **£30 approx**

Pete Cornish
A/B/C Box
Alternatively there's this not-so-cheap buffered three-way device from the great British boffin
RRP **£459**

Ingenious Audio
Jack Wireless Guitar Cable
Recently funded on Kickstarter, this UK-designed transmitter can connect directly to any wi-fi-enabled device
RRP **tba**

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REVEREND
Dub King Bass

The Reverend Dub King brings a welcome splash of originality to the short-scale semi-hollow bass market. Review by **Gareth Morgan**

We've come across a few interesting semi-hollowbody basses over the last 12 months, firstly in May 2014 (Vol 25 No 8) with the Peerless Retromatic B2 and, most recently, three issues ago in fact, (Jan 2015, Vol 26 No 4) Duesenberg's Motown Bass. Both were handsome instruments with a single cutaway, and a single f-hole, with the Duesenberg proving itself to be just a little more versatile, albeit at almost twice the price. This month it's the turn of the Reverend Dub King.

Reverend Guitars was established in 1997 in East Detroit, USA, by Joe Naylor, a guitarist who used his background experience in industrial design and lutherie to create distinctive-looking instruments, using many non-traditional materials, with inspiration taken from semi-hollowbody Silvertone models and Gibson's classic ES-335. Early models had a mahogany core with phenolic laminate back and sides framed by a strip of moulded plastic, and were identical in body shape. Plenty of more traditionally-constructed guitars followed, split into bolt-on or neck-through models.

Initially the guitars were distributed to shops in the time-honoured fashion, but Naylor eventually decided to sell direct, making the company more cost-efficient, and in 2006 shifted production from the USA to Korea, where the guitars are manufactured by the Mirr Music Co, thus cutting costs still further.

In the Reverend bass catalogue there was first the Rumblefish, a critically well-received and very handsome four-stringer that was quickly discontinued. Never mind, because the Reverend bass roster now boasts eight models, including a signature model made for American bassist/singer/composer Meshell Ndegeochello.

Colours are sunburst or this handsome, Gretsch-like orange

Open-back tuners have large, 1/2" diameter posts

The Dub King uses a korina body with a solid spruce top and the set neck is korina again with walnut stringers

Reverend's Dub King is certainly an extremely fine looking bass and follows the basic template established by our previous victims: semi-hollowbody construction, with solid lower bout and chambered upper denoted by the tell-tale f-hole, and a single cutaway – although the solid chunk that effectively forms the front bout curves subtly back towards the body, almost in the style of a Telecaster, rather simply completing the naturally suggested curve. The lower cutaway is nicely recessed for excellent access to the highest fret.

The body itself has korina (or white limba), a wood from tropical western Africa with excellent resonance, at its core, the same wood forming the back and sides, with construction completed by the application of a solid spruce top, its subtle grain pattern almost swamped by the cheery 'rock orange' finish. Further nostalgic credentials are established by the cream binding strip that separates top and sides, and the way the lower edge of the three-ply black/white/black pickguard tracks the body's curves is a nice detail.

Reverend differentiate their basses by the method used to secure the neck, and the DK comes from the Set-Neck ➔

FACTFILE
Reverend Dub King Bass

DESCRIPTION
Semi-hollowbody bass. Made in Korea
PRICE **£691.99**

BUILD **Semi-hollowbody with korina core, back and sides and spruce top, set five-piece korina/walnut neck with 21 medium jumbo nickel frets on a rosewood fingerboard. Open gear tuners and Reverend (semi) string-through or top-load bridge. Chrome hardware**

ELECTRICS **Passive with one Reverend Thick Brick bridge pickup and one Split Brick neck pickup. Volume, Tone and Pickup Pan controls**
LEFT-HANDERS **No**
FINISH **Rock orange, tobacco sunburst**
RANGE OPTIONS **None**

SCALE LENGTH
760mm/30"
NECK WIDTH
Nut 43mm
12th fret 56mm
DEPTH OF NECK
First fret 21mm
12th fret 24mm
STRING SPACING
Nut 11.5mm
Bridge 19mm
ACTION AS SUPPLIED
12th fret treble 2.0mm
12th fret bass 2.5mm
WEIGHT
3.77kg/8.31lbs

CONTACT **Vintage and Modern Guitars**
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www.reverendguitars.co.uk

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Peerless
Retromatic B2
The Peerless Retromatic B2 is a well put-together twin-pickup semi-acoustic bass, and extremely handsome with it
RRP **£999**

Epiphone
Jack Casady Signature
The Epiphone Jack Casady Signature model is a twin-cutaway option with a similar body size and a rich sounding single pickup
RRP **£899**

Pickups have been chosen to get the maximum clarity from the short-scale, semi-hollow design

The Dub King's pan control is interesting because you actually do get audible degrees of mix between each pickup

Series (as opposed to Bolt-On). The neck to be secured to the body via mortise and tenon or dovetail joint and a good adhesive. It comprises a five-piece laminate of three chunks of korina separated by walnut stringers, also with cream binding; Reverend describe the neck as having a 'medium oval' profile but it's slimmer and more playable than the name suggests and it feels really easy under the hand, especially with the 30" scale. There's a similar look to the headstock as with both Peerless and Duesenberg: it's a squashed oblong with a half-moon bulge on top, back-angled in the Gibson style, and fitted with a set of chrome open-gear tuners. Rosewood is employed for the fingerboard and it houses 21 medium nickel frets with no tang blemishes, plus a set of old-school pearloid block markers. A sister set of black dots is embedded in the binding along the top edge.

Reverend fit their own bridge, a chunky chrome unit with optional top-load or semi-string through facility, where each saddle can be locked down to the bridge's baseplate, which Reverend say enhances clarity and attack. Adjustments require a small Phillips screwdriver and an Allen key.

No active electronics here – the Reverend is passive and comes a pair of the company's own pickups, a Thick Brick Bridge model for 'warmth', 'thickness' and 'strong mids', 'punchy like an active but more organic-sounding', and a Split Brick Neck pickup butted right up to the neck, offering 'strong lows and highs' plus 'open mids'. These are hooked up to a line of three potentiometers: two Tele-style knurled chrome knobs for master volume and master tone, plus a black plastic knob which serves as a pickup pan. Visually, it would probably be better with three chrome knobs, as the plastic control cheapens the otherwise classy look.

Fingerboard is bound and has a 12" radius

Single f-hole reveals the hollowed upper body section

Sounds

The Dub King balances decently well on a strap. The extra girth and the lack of comfort chamfering endemic in all semi-hollowbody basses takes a bit of getting used to, but it isn't a serious issue.

Plugging in uncovers a warm, thudding tone with lots of harmonic life – not as much zing as a Danelectro, but we're heading in that direction. The E string has a righteous growl to it and the middle strings have plenty of punch and a raspy clarity, with just about the right amount of high-mid zing for brightness without excessive honk. Responsiveness is pleasingly even across the fretboard, and though the G string sounds just a touch bright to our ears, you could use that to make sure upper-register work comes over clearly. Indeed, there's plenty of evidence of lively highs on display here – they get a bit honky if you really attack the Dub King, but if you lay back a bit then they speak sweetly. Backing off the tone control reduces the crunchy attack slowly and almost imperceptibly, until just before the dubby morass that is full cut, you'll find a softer, more rubbery sound with more focus on the fundamentals – great for old-school funk riffs or solid grooving.

The choice of a pan control over a conventional three-way switch proves interesting, because you actually do get audible degrees of mix between each pickup. Nudge it towards the soloed neck pickup and you start to get a hint of raspy acousticisms, shifting more obvious air, with a tightening midrange and amplified snarl. Output level is also much louder than in twin-pickup mode, and the extra size puts it squarely in your face – one of those sounds that tempts you into aggressive blues riffing. If you chop the tone dial back, the softer notes edges and heavier bottom end thump moves the sound in a rootsier direction, with walking bass styles sounding especially sweet.

Soloing the bridge pickup and playing fingerstyle reveals a throaty, bubbling sound that's sharp and snappy with just the right amount of high-mid gurgle. In truth it's a bit over-lively, but blending the pan control back towards twin pickup mode gradually reduces the sharpness of attack, while chopping the tone control right back also helps, and the fat, tight end result is well worth it.

Verdict

Reverend's Dub King is a very good little bass, and though you can't really attack it with contemporary techniques expecting to get the appropriate sound, what's on offer is fundamentally good. There's plenty of air in the tone, and this – as well as the stand-out looks – helps push it in a jangly guitar band, old school soul or bluesy direction. It's well put-together, and though it's at the higher end of 'affordable', if you fancy a lively semi-hollowbody as a main, second or even third instrument, you'll do yourself a disservice if you don't check one of these out.

FINAL SCORE

REVEREND DUB KING BASS	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Playability	**16**/20
Sound	**17**/20
Value for money	**17**/20
Vibe	**18**/20
TOTAL	**86%**

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KEMPER
Profiler Head

Pino Palladino, Tony Levin and a bunch of other big names are using the Kemper Profiler, now expanded for bass. Review by **Gareth Morgan**

In 2011 Christoph Kemper, developer of Access Virus synthesisers, launched the Profiler, a system for profiling or modelling guitar amps which, rather than employing analysing circuitry, uses a note or sound the amp creates as a basis for the 'profile'. These are then stored and can then be combined in innumerable ways together with stored profiled effects, a selection of modelled cabinets and other amp profiles, and naturally they can also be EQ'd. Of course, all the results can be tucked away for future reference and you can get online updates via USB stick from Kemper's website, where a library of shared profiles is also accessible. Not only that, using a simple mic'ing process and appropriate connections (all clearly explained in the frankly daunting 69-page manual), you can profile sounds from favourite amps, creating a massive amp/cab/FX library for gigs or studio.

Up to now bass players weren't getting the benefit of Kemper's system but that's all changed with a 're-veiling' of the Profiler – with added bass power. It's still housed in a green metal chassis with grey front and back panels approximately 394mm wide, 215mm high and 176mm deep, and its 6kg/13lb payload is unlikely to cause sleepless nights. The Profiler Head has 600W under its hood (the rack version is non-powered) and there's a dizzying selection of controls, ranging from some with commonly identifiable functions – Gain, Noisegate, Mix– to the bottom mainly unlabelled row controlling EQ and a myriad of white flashing buttons. The rear panel is equally impressive with FX loop, speaker, MIDI, USB and DI Out connectivity, amongst others.

Sounds

The bass patches are added to the alphabetic directory of profiles, although we've have preferred them in a designated section. You'll do lot of menu trawling early on, although the library order can be easily manipulated. Assessing the sounds is almost pointless as you can add to the library from both your own raw material and website, but checking out shaping possibilities is well worth it. Browsing through for bass sounds is not the most fun thing in the world to do but we settled on one called Black Bass Clean, ditching the reverb and chorus. The LED display panel is well laid out, with FX/shaping chain along the top, author's name on the right and EQ along the bottom, below name of the chosen sound. Black Bass is a thick tone with warm, valve fatness, a slightly soupy, dark-hued midrange and clean, even highs. Using the EQ parameters – Bass, Middle, Treble and Presence – with five clicks of cut or boost indicated onscreen, you can thin it out, uncovering a wonderfully even full-range sound, or boost for a room-shaking woolly overload. Cutting Middle scoops the proceedings but boosting tightens everything up, adding contemporary crispness and attack. Treble and Presence spring clean the highs which sing without inducing fret noise, enlivening across the whole fretboard. With this patch, the EQ works so instinctively that cuts and boosts do exactly what you expect.

Verdict

To say we've scratched the surface here is the understatement of the century. This is a really important piece of kit for guitarists and bassists, with zillions of uses and endless potential. If you're a sonically inquisitive guitarist or bassist, or write and record for a living, this may be one of the most important purchases you'll ever make, especially if you learn to make your own profiles effectively. It's complex, but if you try one, you will certainly have a massive re-think.

FINAL SCORE

KEMPER PROFILER HEAD	
Build Quality	**18**/20
Versatility	**20**/20
Sound	**18**/20
Value for money	**18**/20
Looks	**16**/20
TOTAL	**90%**

FACTFILE
KEMPER PROFILER HEAD

SPECS **Single-channel 600W digital profiling/ modelling amplifier for bass. Made in Germany**
RRP **£1542**

CONTROLS **17, including Gain, four-band EQ, various FX parameters and Master Volume, plus 38 buttons including Rig Select, EQ/ Amp/Cabinet/Stack On/Off, FX select, etc. Various jack sockets including FX loop, Monitor Out and Direct Output/Send, MIDI In, Out, Thru sockets, Left and Right Main (DI) Output XLR sockets, S/PDIF In and Out mini jack sockets**

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THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF AMPS

This month **Sid Bishop** looks at the fast-changing world of amplifiers, the other half of rock'n'roll...

Whilst I was spending all those entertaining years working in guitar shops I noticed, time and again, that my customers would sacrifice a great amount of time selecting the guitar of their dreams, gladly spending virtually every penny they could gather together, then finally, almost as an afterthought, buy an amplifier to plug it in to, and this particular item usually as cheaply as possible. When I started out I was guilty of the same thing, so I'm in no position to pass judgement. An amplifier was an essential purchase, you couldn't manage to do very much without one, but most viewed it as nothing more than a black box whose sole purpose was to make their prized new guitar audible. We couldn't have been more wrong.

After many years of playing and countless hours listening to others, I now realise just how crucial the choice of an amplifier is. A relatively cheap guitar played through a good quality amp will usually sound pretty good, whereas an expensive top-of-the-range guitar played through a crappy amp will sound, well, like crap. The amplifier gives your guitar its voice. It's a vitally important piece of kit, and there is some logic to the view that in reality greater care, not to mention financial investment, should be expended on your choice of amp rather than your choice of guitar.

We've all become more educated about amps in recent years and are now much more aware of what they actually do, what their capabilities are, and how our eventual choice of equipment has a bearing on the sounds we produce. Furthermore we also now have a wealth of competing products to choose from.

Over time, we've formed firmly held opinions on amplifiers. Some players prefer valve amps, some solid state, and some might even favour a hybrid, and all have quite logical reasons for doing so. Many players are captivated by the romantic appeal of a genuine vintage amplifier, whilst yet more have been swayed by the new generation of modelling amps. We tend to buy whatever is most suitable for our needs at the time.

Gretsch Electromatic Deluxe, made by Valco

We are fortunate that there are a large number of amp manufacturers around today, though this hasn't always been the case. Most of the major guitar manufacturers produce a range of amps to complement their guitars, or at least have done in years past, and in addition the current market seems to be saturated by small boutique makers who offer us really beautifully crafted pieces of equipment, at a price of course. One of my brief internet surfs has just uncovered around 30 such makers. There are other marques who, for a variety of reasons, are now consigned to history, and examples turn up sporadically on the vintage market, usually at very high prices too, such is the current obsession for all things retro.

Back when the electric guitar was first invented in the mid-'30s a purchaser's choice of amp will have been very limited, essential though it was. Makers such as Gibson, Epiphone, Gretsch and Rickenbacker all produced complementary amplifiers, though

Left, a handsome late '50s TV12 combo from Selmer, the pioneer of British amp manufacturing

Above, a rare and super-early Fender with chrome front strips and even a wooden handle

appearing primitive to our modern eyes, and often looking like little more than picnic cases with a speaker mounted inside them. Generally kicking out all of five or six watts, they were nonetheless the state of the art at the time, and seemed adequate for the jazz and country bands of the day. Very few survive from this period, and those that do are really museum pieces. Further development in amplifiers, or guitars come to that, had to be put on hold during the inconvenient interruption that was the Second World War.

Upon the advent of rock and roll in the 1950s and the massive surge in the popularity of the electric guitar that went hand-in-glove with that particular genre, it soon became obvious that something more was required. More power became essential as the decade progressed, and 10W amps gave way to 20W amps, which in turn were superseded by 50W units, and so the 'arms race' continued. Not for the first time Fender led the way, and even by 1952 had already introduced the awesome Twin amp. This generated 65W in its original form, but by 1958 had been redesigned to deliver a truly gigantic 85W. Fender have made many varieties of the amp in the years since, including solid-state versions, and still produce a Twin to this day, even one reproducing the attractive, though ultimately impractical, varnished tweed covering.

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Needless to say original fully working examples of these, and indeed all other 'tweed' Fender amps, currently fetch very serious money. As I'm sure you know none of these beauties were available to us here in the UK at the time due to the post-war embargo on US-made goods which was not finally lifted until mid 1959. Any that you might see here now therefore have been bought over in later years by enthusiasts, dealers and collectors.

We British buyers would be forced to choose from a very limited range which might at best have included a Selmer, a Dallas, a Fenton-Weill or an early type Vox or WEM (Watkins Electric Music). These were all small and limited in performance. It was all we had, so we just got on with it. Happily, all this was about to change. Really useable amps, such as the Vox AC30 and the Selmer Thunderbird Twin Fifty, amongst others, had appeared by the end of that decade, and we guitarists could at last finally start to seriously deafen people, and ourselves.

The evolution of amplifiers continued unabated into the '60s, and not merely in terms of their wattage. By the end of the decade we had the awesome Ampeg SVT's, those wonderful Acoustic 260s and 360s, Fender Dual Showmans, Sunn Coliseums (the best big amp ever), and probably most memorably of all the Marshall stack, the go-to amp if you were really serious about blowing the pub windows out. They also became more efficient tonally, and other effects such as distortion, reverb, and tremolo (or vibrato) became common. Manufacturing processes improved immensely, incorporated better quality control and component standards, and entire factories sprang up designed to produce nothing but guitar amplifiers, so they were better made and more reliable.

There was however an ever-present Achilles heel, and it existed within what was basically a piece of electrical equipment still constructed from designs carried over from the world of '30s radio technology – the valves that many of these amps were using. Valves would shake loose, rattle and cause poor connections, they had an unfortunate tendency to shatter if you happened to knock the amp over or drop it, and worst of all they would burn out requiring replacement, frequently in as little as a year.

At some point someone thought it would be a really cool idea if a guitar amp could be made using the brand-new and space age technology of transistors. The very first transistor radios appeared as far back as 1953, and their benefits became quickly evident. They were lighter, the circuitry itself took up a lot less space, and they were far more reliable.

Left, the Burns Orbit range led the way for solid state amps in the UK

Lucky US players had the mighty tweed Twin

A canny endorsee program helped Vox become one of the most visible brands of the '60s

It wouldn't be too long before somebody somewhere applied the same technology and all of those advantages to other electronic appliances, including guitar amplifiers. All of the aforementioned valve-related problems would be eradicated at a stroke, and you'd have a piece of equipment that was smaller, lighter to carry to gigs, and offered total reliability. What could possibly go wrong?

There are several competing companies who claim to have 'invented' the transistor, or solid-state, dedicated guitar amplifier. Both Standel and Kay present convincing cases, and there are examples from both that are reported to date from around 1962. A small Gibson amp was to follow in 1963, and for once it was a British company that made their mark in the same year and the Burns Orbit 40 and 60 arrived on the market. I owned an Orbit 60, purchased from Selmers at around that time, so I must have had one of the very first examples. It was a good amp actually, at least to my untrained ears, was reliable, looked great, but my ever-increasing appetite for volume eventually forced me into using it in tandem with a Vox AC30. On one unlucky night on the way to a gig it flipped over in the back of the van and never worked again.

With a transistor amplifier you'd have a piece of equipment that was smaller than a valve amp, lighter to carry to gigs, and offered total reliability

Most other makers jumped on this bandwagon. The first transistor WEM and Vox amps appeared in 1964, Vox probably best remembered for the T60, Super Beatle and Royal Guardsman amps, and by the following year we would have been all but overwhelmed by an avalanche of transistor amps from Selmer, Dallas and Baldwin, with companies like Gibson still expanding their existing ranges; also, most manufacturers continued to offer a range of valve amps as well. 1966 saw the first 'slant-front' tranny amps from Fender; these were truly dreadful, being poorly made, sounding even worse, and I've been reliably informed that large quantities of unsold amplifiers were simply left out in the factory car park to rot away in the California sun. It was a marketing disaster for Fender, and it would be many years before they tried again. More to come next month!

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Sonic SOUVENIRS

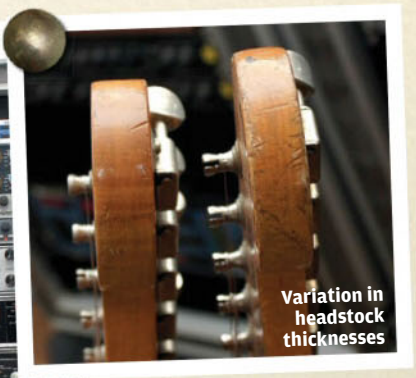
Ross Godfrey, guitarist with classic folk-hop-electronica trio Morcheeba and South London's new folk-rockers Little Mountain, grabbed many of his beloved guitars while out on tour. Lars Mullen examines the spoils of his far-flung travels...

'When we started Morcheeba,our aim was to match some of the music we loved from rock history – Hendrix, the West Coast California sound, Crosby, Stills & Nash – with more modern electronic and hip-hop styles,' explains Ross Godfrey. 'Our singer Skye was into country music and Nina Simone, so it was basically a melting pot of new and old music, a kind of spectrum of musical influences that somehow fitted into the trip-hop sound we were known for.

'When we started the band in 1995, though, I only had a few guitars, and I used pretty much all of them on our first album, *Who Can You Trust?*, which came out in '96. Things started happening for us pretty quickly, though, and in no time we found ourselves taking off on our first world tour. After making a few of those long treks, it became obvious I was somehow coming home with more guitars than I was going out with! So from that time onwards, my guitar collection really started to expand.

'I would have been in my late teens at the time, and when we were back in the UK, we lived in the Morcheeba recording studio in Clapham in South London. We slept in the studio on the floor or

Two mid-'60s Jaguars: the clean one (left) has the later pearl dots, the worn one has clay dots



Variation in headstock thicknesses

the couch, so we didn't really have any overheads when it came to rent, and every penny I earned from music I put back into guitars.

'It was obvious that the USA and Canada were the countries to find some great bargains. No matter what state we were in, as soon as we arrived at the next town I'd religiously jump off the tour bus and go on a mission to ogle at all the used guitars in the local music stores and pawnshops.

'I can distinctly recall during our third USA tour going into a store and asking to play a Telecaster and a Fender Champ, both from the 1950s. I was only about 20 at the time and they gave me a kind of worried look, but I'll never forget how beautiful the sound was. Ever since then, I've tried to recapture that kind of sound with my older guitars and amps. Funnily enough, I remember that old Tele cost $15,000 at the time. I went back to the shop 10 years later and the guy had bought it back in, and it was now $80,000!'

Hunting for undiscovered vintage gems quickly proved to be a good deal more fun in America than it had been for Ross growing up in Kent. 'In the UK in the '80s you'd only find the odd secondhand Fender or Gibson, and they weren't always the best models,' he says. 'So when we began touring I was just mesmerised at the sheer quantity of so many cool guitars – especially in the USA. I was in raptures checking out all the old bluesy guitars, weird brands like Silvertone, Danelectro and Mosrite... things I had never seen in the flesh.'

Even if a guitar is mint, rare and affordable, if it doesn't have the sound Ross is after then it won't become part of his collection. 'I've only ever bought guitars where I could use their sound to the full in the studio and live too,' he promises. 'I wouldn't buy a guitar if I didn't have a use for it, even if it looked just stunning, and was really collectable. I've recorded with all of these here... and toured with most of them, too.'

Ross began his on-tour shopping with things that were familiar and relatively affordable. 'I'd only look at Fender models from the '70s at the beginning, which at the time didn't have the price tags of the pre-CBS models,' he says. 'Back then the popular Fender guitars – Teles and Strats, for example – were reasonably priced in the USA, but there were some even better deals on some of the other models that were being neglected by collectors, like Jazzmasters and Mustangs... and of course Jaguars.

'My two Jaguars are both from 1965, and I've loved them to bits ever since I bought them. You can see that one is quite worn, while the other is pretty much pristine. I picked up the worn one on a Canadian tour during one of my treks to the local guitar shops, but before we had left for the tour I'd also told a friend if he saw a decent one in the UK while I was away he should buy it for me, so there was at least a chance I'd find a good one. I didn't think any more of it, then a little while after we got back from that tour, he knocked on the door with the other one, and it was in mint condition!

1975 maple-neck Strat and early '60s Fender Bass VI

'Although they're both '65s, the cleaner one has a thicker headstock. I use this one in the studio a lot; it has a lot more top-end jangle than the battered one, which I take on tour with Morcheeba. My tech is always saying I should put a Gibson-style bridge on it as the strings often bounce out of the saddles, but that would be sacrilege.

'I don't know if it's because it's had a lot more use, but the worn one certainly has more of a mellow tone. It's often said that Jaguars have a reputation for not having the same sound twice, and I agree with that. When all those switches get gunky with age, it can get quite interesting.'

For the next guitar, a Strat, we jump ahead a few years in the collection timeline. 'I bought this in 2006 from the legendary Norman's Rare Guitars in the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles, California when I lived there,' Ross details. 'I moved out there to be somewhere sunny for a change – I'd commute back when Morcheeba toured out of London during the summer months, and go back to the warm during the UK winter. Like a lot of musicians out there, I had a studio in the garage of my house in the Hollywood Hills with a lot of guitars, and I really wanted a decent Strat.

'Norman is renowned for sourcing guitars for the rock stars of the world, so I thought if I paid him a visit there was a good chance he'd have a decent selection of cool Strats. I told him '60s ones were too expensive, so he let me play some from the '70s, and I fell in love with this '75. This one is featured a lot on Morcheeba's album *Blood Like Lemonade*.

'I've only ever wanted a Strat with a maple neck. I like the extra bite it gives, and it makes seeing where you are on the neck in a dark club easier! Mind you, I think mainly it's because night after night as a 10 year old kid I would stare at a poster of Jimi Hendrix with a maple neck Strat before I went to sleep...'

Next to the Strat is an oddball Fender bought for a very specific ➔

Ross with one of his favourite guitars, a '65 Gibson ES-335

Telecasters: early '70s in butterscotch, mid-'70s in white, and a mid-'70s Deluxe

'Teles have the tone, the playability, the no-frills simplicity, and they don't go out of tune. They've also made me a much better player'

purpose. 'When I started to record and write a lot at home I needed a decent bass, but I wanted one that could give me more top end. I was obsessed with the sound that the legendary Carol Kaye had on the David Axelrod recordings from the '60s – that toppy, clicking bass sound, drenched in reverb. I just couldn't get it from any four-string bass, so I talked to a lot of friends about it, and they said it must be a Fender VI six-string electric bass.

'I played this one in a shop for ages and absolutely fell in love with it. I was a little unsure as it wasn't that cheap, but the guy said that if I didn't want it then he'd sell it to Robert Smith of the Cure, who sprays all his guitars black. I couldn't bear to think about this gorgeous sunburst going under the can, so I bought it.

'It's similar to playing a guitar but an octave down, and as the strings are pretty close together it's ideal for playing beefy chords and heavy riffs. I use a Music Man 4x10" combo with a ton of reverb, sometimes with a touch of added sub-bass for a bit more weight, and I can get the exact sound I was after. I've used it more or less on every record I've made, including a track called *Even More* from the album *Little Mountain*, which is a band I have running alongside Morcheeba, with Ste Forshaw also on guitar, and my wife Amanda Zamolo on vocals.'

For those of a certain age, what drew them to the Gibson 335 was not so much BB King or Clapton with Cream, but Marty McFly duck-walking across the stage in the film *Back To The Future*. 'I decided there and then that one day, just one day, I'll have one of those,' Ross grins. 'I think I was about 25 before I could afford this one, which is a sunburst from around '65. I've ended up raising the action and using it in open tuning for slide. I've played it at just about every gig I've done since the day I bought it – it's well-travelled, to say the least.'

The 335 might be a fixture but for Ross, but Teles are his 'can't live without' guitars. 'They're my main love,' he decides. 'It's the tone, the playability, the no-frills simplicity... and they don't go out of tune. I can fly to Australia, take it out and it'll still be in perfect pitch. I think I've also become a much better player since knuckling down with a Telecaster.

'I have three at the moment, all with maple fingerboards. I bought this white one for £200 when I was about 12... I have to thank my mum, who lent me the money, after a lot of persuasion. Again, it's been on everything I've recorded. There's quite a bit of lacquer cracking on the back of the neck... that's the result of the trailer with all the Morcheeba gear getting stranded overnight in Canada in minus 30 degrees. All the equipment froze solid, several guitars were rendered useless, but the Tele survived with just lacquer cracks.

'It hasn't been easy to find another as good, but the butterscotch one is a really nice back up. Making up the trio here is this Custom, bought purposely for the humbucker to try and eliminate some of the dirty mains hum I was picking up with the single coils at some venues, and it does add a new dimension to the great Tele sound.

'I use the Teles a lot through an early '70s Marshall stack. This goes back to a memory I have of seeing a film of Steve Cropper of Booker T & the MGs playing through the same rig – pretty out of character with his sound, but it sounded fantastic. I just think Fender just got it right first time... I don't think anyone has built a better guitar. If you asked the "desert island" question, I could only live there with Teles for company.'

Next up, a nicely battered Jazzmaster. 'It was J Mascis, the guitar player in Dinosaur Jr, who originally inspired me to buy one. I looked

Rare white/gold Jazzmaster with tweed Deluxe

1959 Supro Belmont in pink pearloid

for quite a while, as I wanted a custom colour, and I found this one in cream – which was originally white, no doubt – with a matching headstock. I think it looks great with the tortoiseshell scratchplate.

'The body wear is all original – I love worn and played-in guitars, but I wouldn't buy a new guitar that's been distressed for the sake of it, I think that's a bit weird – and the gold hardware is still in pretty good condition for a Jazzmaster dating from '64. It's sympathetic to any style I do. It's so easy to play, even with .011 gauge strings, which feel like .009s. This one gets used a lot live and for tracks where I need a decent vibrato. It's very touch-sensitive and reacts really well either with natural amp feedback or with a cool fuzz pedal for soaring whammy harmonics.

'The Jazzmaster sounds really good through this little Fender Deluxe combo from the '50s. I always thought the amp lacked top end, but realised that for ages I'd been plugging into the Normal input instead of the Bright channel! The lettering on the control panel had worn away, so I'd been guessing which input was which.

'I've always had a thing for guitars from the '50s, and this Supro Belmont is a '59. It has what I believe is called the maroon moto finish, or pink mother-of-toilet-seat as it's often referred to, and it was made by the National company. I came across this in a pawnshop in the USA.

Jimi Hendrix's first electric guitar was a Supro, so it was a bit of a must-have, and I didn't have another pink guitar. If I need that Howlin' Wolf or Hubert Sumlin kind of sound, I'll reach for the Supro – it can deliver real authentic '50s blues more or less through any amp, but especially an Fenton-Weill Cadet I have, which has an amazing overdriven sound – there's no headroom for clean, it's all heavy crunch onwards, so it's ideal. I used it on a track called *You Never Know* on the Little Mountain album.

'Here's a cool guitar, a Music Man StingRay 1. I don't think they made that many as guitar players at the time wanted to be seen with a Fender or a Gibson, although bass players were really happy with the StingRay basses. Alex Weir, who played with Talking Heads, used a StingRay 1, and I loved that tone he got. I found this one in a shop in Albuquerque,. The natural finish looks really good, but when you get down to the build and the active electronics you can see it was ahead of its time. If I need a disco sound, this is the one.

'For the first Morcheeba album I just used guitars with single coils, so when I started writing for the follow up, *Big Calm*, I thought it was time to go down the humbucker road for a thicker tone. I tried a few Les Pauls in Denmark Street but I couldn't imagine being on stage for a couple hours with all that weight. Then I tried this '70s SG with a walnut finish, and it felt perfect. It sounds beautiful through any amp, but it pushes the front end of my Watkins Dominator particularly well for a wonderful natural overdrive. It's quite prominent on the track *Blindfold* on *Big Calm*.'

A solid bass sound is the foundation of a host of Morcheeba songs. 'I needed a low-end thud for some tracks, and this Gibson EB-0 lives up to its reputation with a thick, muddy sound. I'd always loved the sound Jack Bruce got from his EB-3, and the EB-0 seemed the way to go. I've used it a lot on the Little Mountain album for an almost a double bass-type sound. I've tried to increase the midrange with various EQ settings but whatever you do, it just stays the same... so why change it?'

Ross likes a spot of guitar synth, too. 'This is the legendary Roland G-505 guitar with the GR300 polyphonic synthesiser,' he says proudly. 'Early on I studied at the BRIT School in London and learned about analogue synthesis, so I was familiar with oscillating phasers, filters and waveforms, all of which is only a hop, jump and skip away from using a wah-wah and fuzz guitar. There is of course a latency problem with these older units, but for me it's a marriage made in heaven – it's the missing link between playing fuzz-wah guitar and using analogue synths with a keyboard. I've used this Roland rig to create some amazing atmospheric, space-age sounds for our recordings, especially through my original Roland Space Echo.' ↔

Mid-'70s Music Man StingRay 1 guitar

A 1970s Gibson SG Standard with vibrato and a '60s EB-0 bass

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Roland GR-505 sitting below a Hammond C3

Unusual 1971 Mosrite 500 Blues Bender

He's also a fan of vintage pedals. 'I am a bit of a pedalhead, especially when it comes to early stuff... I'm also pretty keen on the various mic preamps and compressors which we use in the studio. A lot of musicians I've talked to agree that music and music production reached a peak in the late '60s and early '70s with valve technology, but it's got worse ever since digital technology arrived. So I've tracked down and cherry-picked what I feel is the best equipment from the golden era of recorded sound, the time when they really got it right.

'My favourite vintage pedals include a germanium-transistor Maestro FZ1 fuzz, which I believe was designed by Bob Moog. This is the best fuzz pedal I've ever used, and it's so easy to adjust hands-free, with the foot-operated rotary controls.

'I also have a late '60s Maestro Rhythm And Sound effect unit – the Beastie Boys used one of these, and even and named a track after it. Apart from having percussion sounds, it also has an amazing fuzz sound and envelope filters, plus a bass tracking system that follows the guitar's lead lines. I believe it was a product from Gibson to allow the player to be a psychedelic one-man band. I love old effects with strange characteristics that you can't get from a lap top or a plug-in.

'I've got a few keyboards as well. I know we're talking about guitars, but I must mention this classic Hammond C3 electric organ from the '50s. It had been in the middle of Streatham ice rink in London since the '60s, and it was painted white to match the decor. An old lady sat and played while people circled her on skates! I bought it when they modernised the building. It's proved invaluable ever since and it's been on every record we've made.'

Back to guitars, with a very unusual model from Mosrite of California. 'While I was looking into the possibilities of a Les Paul, I ran across a rare '71 Mosrite Blues Bender solidbodied electric in New York. It fitted into the kind of Les Paul genre but I felt it was more individual, and I've never seen another one since. It's got a really thick tone, and a handy button to change the phase of the pickups. On the way home, the customs guy at Heathrow airport stopped me and grilled me about this guitar for over five hours... they even brought in the airport's guitar expert! When they finally let me go they asked for tickets to Morcheeba's Albert Hall gig in London. Needless to say they didn't get any!'

A resonator next, with a rather unusual finish. 'I have an acoustic corner in the studio, where I keep my favourite songwriting guitars, and one of them is a 1930s National single cone resonator. I'd been looking for a decent resonator for ages, and I'd been recommended this place on Staten Island, New York. It was a really run-down old building full of vintage gear, most of which were at least 70 years old. The guy let me sit and play them all until I picked this one because it felt the best for me.

'The finish is typical for that period _ they would paint the bodies black, cover them in cane sugar then put them in an oven, and the paint would crack and reveal random patterns. I'm using this one for slide on a track called *Sound Mirror* on the Little Mountain album.

'On that same song, Steve is playing this Martin 000-16. It's the ideal fingerpicking guitar. I bought the Martin purposely for recording, as I feel big-bodied jumbo guitars can be so woofy down a mic compared to a smaller-bodied Martin. I've also fitted a ↔

Hofner Western Jumbo, a '30s National resonator guitar and a Martin 000-16

The National's 'frosted duco' finish

DeArmond 210 soundhole pickup

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Hofner Ambassador and a Silvertone Thin Twin by Kay

1920s English banjo and an eight-string Hagstrom bass

'I worked with Jim White, who would buy a $50 pawnshop guitar, play it that night at the gig, and then sell it to someone in the audience for $200'

DeArmond 210 soundhole pickup from the 1950s, as used by the likes of Lightning Hopkins... and John Martyn. I often blend the pickup with a live mic at the soundhole with maybe a little added tremolo effect – it sounds just fantastic.

'I also run the same system with my trusty old Hofner Western Jumbo. This dates from around the mid-'60s, and I bought it from eBay for £50. It's been on a lot of our records, and now and again I've played it through an EMS Synthesiser to get a filter sound. This guitar turned out to be a cheap but very cheerful buy.

'The drum kit you can see in the photo is an original Rogers kit from the '60s which I bought in Los Angeles, so it's ideal to match the vintage studio equipment we've been using. The Little Mountain album has a very traditional, organic sound, so it fits in really well.

Next up, a rescued Hofner double-cut semi-acoustic. 'I saw this Hofner Ambassador in a secondhand washing machine shop in East London,' laughs Ross. 'It was part of a house clearance and had been sat in a loft since the '60s. It looks and plays fine now, so maybe all the dirt and dust had kept it in good condition underneath. I used it on the first Morcheeba single, *Trigger Hippie*, and it also featured in the video. There's no centre block in the body so it tends to feed back at high volume. Because of that it never goes out on stage – it just sits close to me in the studio for writing.

'When I lived in California I got to know a hippie band called Brightblack Morning Light, and I was just in awe of the tone that the guitar player got from his Silvertone Thin Twin, the "Jimmy Reed" model. I eventually found this one in a shop in San Francisco. The neck is really fat and it's in superb condition for 1956, and the tone you get from the blade pickups is really inspiring.

'I was vaguely aware of Hagstrom guitars after seeing Jimi Hendrix pictured with one, and I also found out that Noel Redding used a Hagstrom bass on several tracks, including *Spanish Castle Magic*.

'I found this '60s eight-string bass in a shop in the USA, and just fell in love with the big ringing sound of the octave strings. I haven't used it live, but it's great for jamming with a drummer... it's got such a full sound that there's hardly any need for a guitar player.

'I love to have a few alternative instruments sitting around. This five-string banjo for example was made by Goodman in Manchester in the 1920s. I was working with a guy called Jim White, a country player from Florida, and he started playing an amazing riff on it, and it escalated into a song called *Handcuffed To A Fence In Mississippi*.

'Jim was certainly a character. When I toured with him in the USA he would buy a pawnshop guitar for 50 dollars during the day, play it that same night at the gig, and then sell it to someone in the audience afterwards for at least 200 dollars. It worked every time!

'He took me into one shop where I saw this little U1 Silvertone from the '50s, and he couldn't believe I was willing to pay $100 for it! I'm so glad I did, as they're worth quite a bit now, and they're still being reissued.

'After six years in the USA with no seasons I'm happy to be back in London, sitting with the Silvertone, writing songs for the next Little Mountain album. I've learned to appreciate UK winters all over again, and I'd like to think that I've bought back some Californian canyon folk-rock with me...'

Silvertone U1, bought for an outrageous $100

For more on Little Mountain visit www.littlemountain.co, and to catch up with Morcheeba go to www.morcheeba.co.uk

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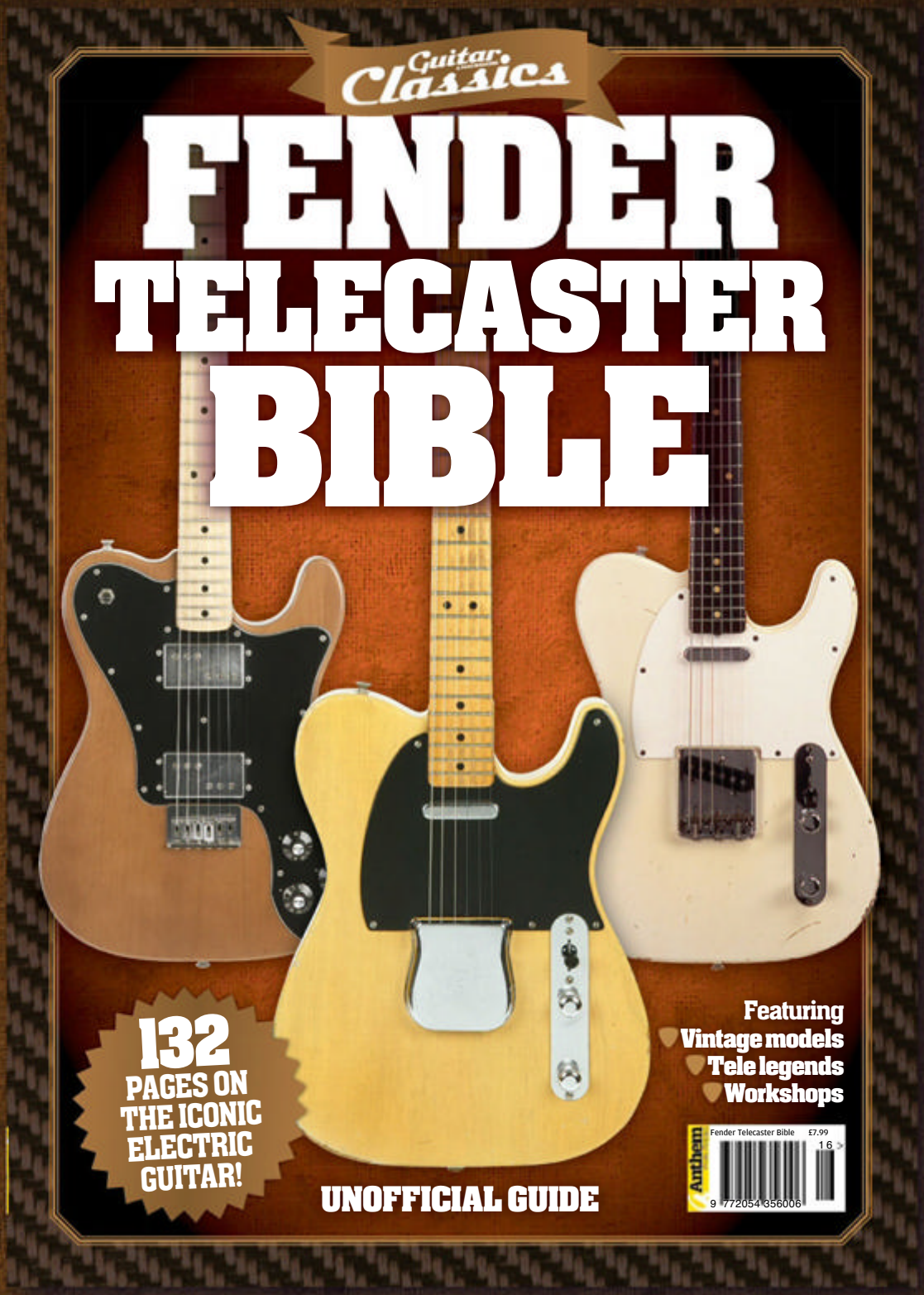

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THE BASS DIRECT STORY

WORKSHOP

DIRECT INJECTION

Stuffed with over 200 instruments from 20 manufacturers, Bass Direct near Reading is a rare oasis for hunters of fine modern basses and bass amplification. **Michael Heatley** meets the main man, Mark Stickley...

You may not know Mark Stickley's name, but followers of the low end will certainly recognise his company, Bass Direct. He doesn't regret giving up 20 years as a pro musician and sound engineer in the middle of the last decade to spread the gospel of bass in the retail sector, but the name he chose is something of a misnomer. The website is an important marketing tool, true, but it isn't about 'direct' selling; indeed, there's nothing he likes more than to get players through the doors of his Warwickshire showroom for some one-to-one bass counselling.

'It's always been about the shop,' he insists. 'Although we do sell on the internet, this was only ever going to be a sideline for me – it turned into a business over the years. The reason we called it Bass Direct was that we talked direct to manufacturers. It was nothing to do with insurance, holidays or direct selling; we are a shop and always have been. My ethos was always about getting people to come and pick things up.'

His personal epiphany came 10 years ago when he was looking for a lightweight five-string bass. 'I'd used Warwicks, but needed something lighter and easier to play. I came across Roscoe Guitars, which a guy in England was trying to import. But it failed because the Bass Centre had gone and no other shops in the UK would take a high-end instrument. It was the best five-string I've ever played, but I'd never heard of the brand.'

This is when Stickley, like a modern-day Christopher Columbus, went on a voyage of

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bass discovery. 'I realised the Americans had been beavering away for 20 years making amazing equipment that wasn't available in the UK because no-one was importing it any more. There was a gap in the market for someone doing nice, high-end basses, and primarily five-string basses.'

Somewhat contentiously, Mark sees the conventional four-string, tuned E-G, as becoming obsolete. 'The reality is that, if you're playing contemporary pop/party music from the '70s onwards, you really benefit from using a five-string bass. You've got all the notes you want in more convenient positions. Companies like Fender and Music Man are comfortable in the reproduction antiques business; they are very good at producing instruments that were designed 40 to 50 years ago when the requirements of the bass guitar in music was different. They're continuing to produce them, but their five-string basses can feel and play like a four-string with an extra string stuck on when compared to a contemporary five-string that was designed as such from the ground up.'

For examples of those 'ground up' designs, he mentions such names as Roscoe, Mike Tobias (MTD) and Dingwall. 'They're more proactive at producing a superior instrument,' he says, 'and that's important, because if you design an instrument as a five-string then it's going to work better.'

Six-string basses represent, he believes, 'a smaller market, for people are doing chordal work or playing jazz when they might need the high C. What people need to play is E in the 5th position, G in the 8th position and D in the 3rd position rather than playing an open E and running out of notes.'

In terms of construction, Mark insists things have moved on since the '70s, when set and through-neck instruments made their bow. 'Bolt-ons give you a better sound and through necks better sustain,' he concludes, 'but most people don't want sustain, they want fast, punchy notes. Modern bolt-on necks are a firm fit, they don't slop around like the old ones of the '50s and '60s; different woods can give different sounds.'

Dingwall is a brand that suits the Bass Direct philosophy well

'The reality is if that you're playing contemporary pop/party music from the '70s onwards, you really benefit from using a five-string bass'

He finds the new global manufacturing scene inspiring. 'I think Far Eastern instruments, the Korean and even the Chinese stuff, have become very good indeed. The new Chinese-made Dingwall Combustions for £1200-1300 are outrageously good; the Americans will have to up their game. We buy from Japan, France, Germany and China, but it's like the car market. With the technology today, there is no excuse to have a bad bass.'

Pickups, says Stickley, have evolved massively in the last 10 years or so. 'Great brands of the '70s have been superseded in the same way that LED has taken over TV,' he says. 'The new pickups are like fabulous microphones; they are more precise, more airy, more responsive and, although they can be tailored to reproduce old sounds, new makers like Nordstrand and Aero are far superior to what went before due to new understanding in design.'

While the bass's biggest period of evolution came in the '80s with the arrival of graphite constriction and active EQ, Stickley thinks technology has now matured to offer greater flexibility. 'While old gear we get in the shop like Statuses and Wals have a very specific sound, modern basses have a much larger palette which makes them more usable tools. Realistically, I'm running a tool shop, a place where bass players can find the right tool for the job – but you may find that the instrument you get does a lot of other things you didn't realise it could do.'

If bass amplifiers started life as scaled-up guitar amps that pushed sound into the venue, today's systems are different beasts. 'Very few bands today are driving their ↦

BASS AND BELIEF

Mark has found bass players, as a breed, more conservative than their guitar counterparts. 'They're often quite quiet and have low self-esteem... we try to give people a leg up and say "Here's some great gear – this is how good you can sound". They feel better about what they're doing in the band. Giving people confidence is a big part of what we do.

'The bass, drums and vocals are the most important part of any band,' he continues. 'The keyboards and guitar add colour, but bass players don't realise how important they are. Many bands could turn up without a guitarist and do a gig, but they couldn't turn up without a bass player or drummer.'

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sound from the back of the stage; they are all using PA, so it's like a bass stage monitor system. It's about giving yourself the best sound possible onstage to allow yourself to be heard and to allow your band members to hear you clearly.'

When it comes to valve versus solid-state, there's no doubting our man's allegiance. Using valves for bass amps, Stickley argues, makes no sense. 'They're too slow. For guitars they thicken and widen the sound, but for a bass you don't want that – you need a punchy, clear, precise sound. Bass amplification today is not about adding colour. If you buy a good bass, that's the sound you want to hear. It's about clearly reproducing the sound from your bass, and maybe your effects.'

Talking of effects, he has an array of bass-specific pedals to help customers get the sound they want. 'When you see Rush, Geddy Lee's playing a Jazz Bass but what you are hearing is a hugely processed sound, using DSP [Digital Sound Processing] – he can make his bass sound like what he wants. Outboard effects are more sophisticated now, and a lot are being made by small boutique manufacturers who understand their market, how to transpose the sound of a bass into something that works live. In the past, most bass effects were guitar effects with bass written on them... bear in mind a bass now has the frequency response of a grand piano.'

So what does the future hold for the bass and Bass Direct? 'My opinion is that the bass market is exciting; companies like us try to get people to look beyond what they have been carrying around. I'm hugely positive or I wouldn't do this seven days a week, 12 hours a day. We've got a long way to go, and all I'm trying to do is drag bass players into the 21st century. I don't think people have realised how much things have changed.

'There have been some huge leaps in the last 10 years, and when I got into this I was amazed how little information was out there. I want to encourage people to move on rather than constantly go back into their little cave! New companies come in and people need to know about them.

Sandberg is a brand that supplies modernists and traditionalists alike

'Valve amps are too slow for bass. You need a punchy, clear, precise sound. If you buy a good bass, that's the sound you want to hear'

'There's only so far you can take the bass, but we aren't quite there yet. I genuinely want to disseminate a positive vibe about bass guitars and where we are today; people often buy things because they think they should. It's all about getting people to think about what they do.'

And so we return to the 'bass counselling' side of the business – which, if website testimonials tell a story, provides a much-needed personal service. 'My customers often come in looking a bit confused. I guess what I'm trying to do is disseminate information and out it on a plate for them rather than a knee-jerk reaction purchase: "I'll buy that because he's using it". It's about stopping people buying a brand that just fills a hole in their life, stuff they don't need or want, and buying something that works for them.

'When I found that Roscoe all those years ago, it made me think about all those years I'd been playing all the wrong instruments, the poor advice – or no advice – I'd been given by music shops and the money I'd wasted. I'm trying to get people to break those habits. I get pleasure out of people who really get it, who listen to what you say. Read the testimonials... plenty of guys are chuffed to bits, and that's what makes it all worthwhile.'

Xotic basses are used by players from Dave Swift to Chuck Rainey

Four-string, five-string and six-string Roscoe basses from North Carolina

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Clean Sweeping

Sweep picking is the key to achieving smooth, rapid arpeggios. **Douglas Noble** has all the info

This month we're going to look at two exercises designed to promote a good sweep picking technique (and next month, we'll look at some arpeggios that put the technique into practice). Now, sweep picking enables the guitarist to play arpeggios at blinding speed, essentially by fingering the arpeggios one note per string, enabling the plectrum to 'sweep' through the arpeggio in a 'continuous upstroke' or 'continuous downstrokes' motion. The downside is that it requires considerable coordination between both hands to sound effective – but don't despair, the following exercises will help you develop this skill.

1 ONE WAY... 2/4 TIME

This exercise is intended to be fingered one finger per fret, with the fourth finger at the seventh fret, the third finger at the sixth, the second finger at the fifth and the first finger at the fourth. Keep your fingers as close to the fretboard as possible, so they have the least possible distance to travel, and use the tips of the fingers.

The fingers could be placed lightly on the strings without pressing against the fretboard but try to avoid actually holding down the notes since this increases the chances of sounding some unwanted notes. We want to hear only one note at a time, so as soon as you go to the next note, lift the finger from the previous string. The pick directions indicate four downstrokes followed by four upstrokes.

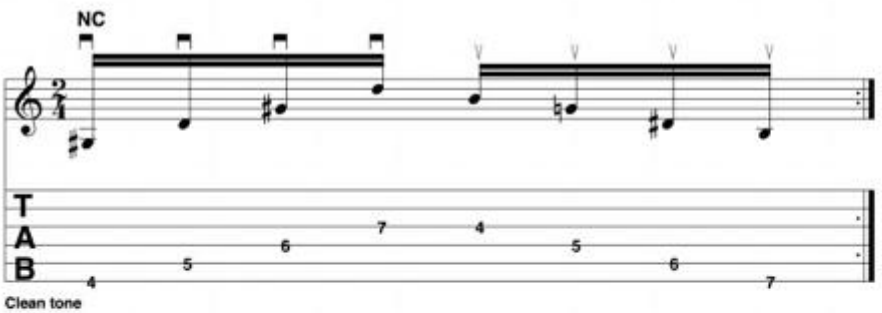
Start very slowly, say crotchet = 60, in order to build up the basic coordination. Play the pattern continuously. At slow speeds, in preparation for sweeping at faster speeds, avoid taking the plectrum out from between the strings after plucking a note; rest the plectrum on the next string instead. Gradually increase the speed, always making sure there is only one note sounding at a time and making sure that your fingers are as close to the fretboard as possible. You may find it useful to practise the first five notes of the pattern – the four downstroke plucked notes followed by the first of the upstroke plucked notes – in order to get some concentrated learning time on the ascending part of the pattern. Similarly, to get a real workout on the descending part of the pattern, play the four upstroke plucked notes followed by the first of the downstroke plucked notes. At a faster speed it will become apparent that this exercise can be played far faster with sweep picking than with alternate picking.

When you're comfortable with this pattern on the bottom four strings, practise this exercise on the middle four strings, then the top four – the different gauges give the exercise a different feel. Ultimately, we're aiming for crotchet = 180, but it may take weeks or even months to get there! As ever, patience and regular practise are the keys to progress.

2 ...AND THE OTHER 2/4 TIME

This is basically the reverse of Exercise 1, and all the fingering principles we've just been through apply. This pattern does not lie as naturally underneath the fretting hand as the pattern in Exercise 1, mind, so it's a tricky workout. Remember to only have one note sounding at a time, and lift the fingers as little as possible.

Start very slowly, possibly even without a metronome in order to get used to the pattern. Then, practise at crotchet = 60 and gradually increase the speed. As in Exercise 1, once you feel comfortable with this pattern practise it on the middle four strings, and then on the top four strings.



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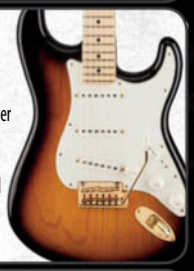

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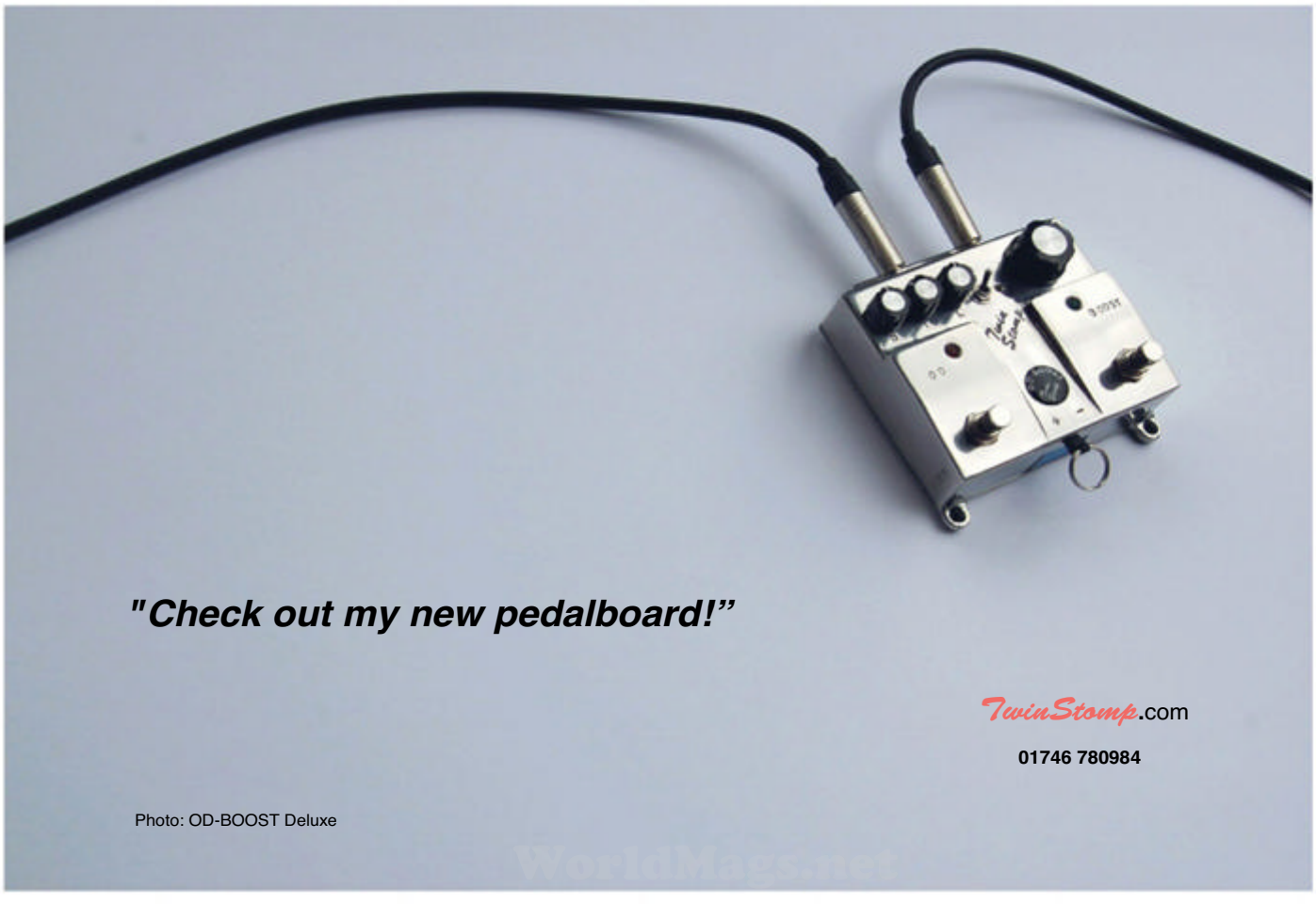

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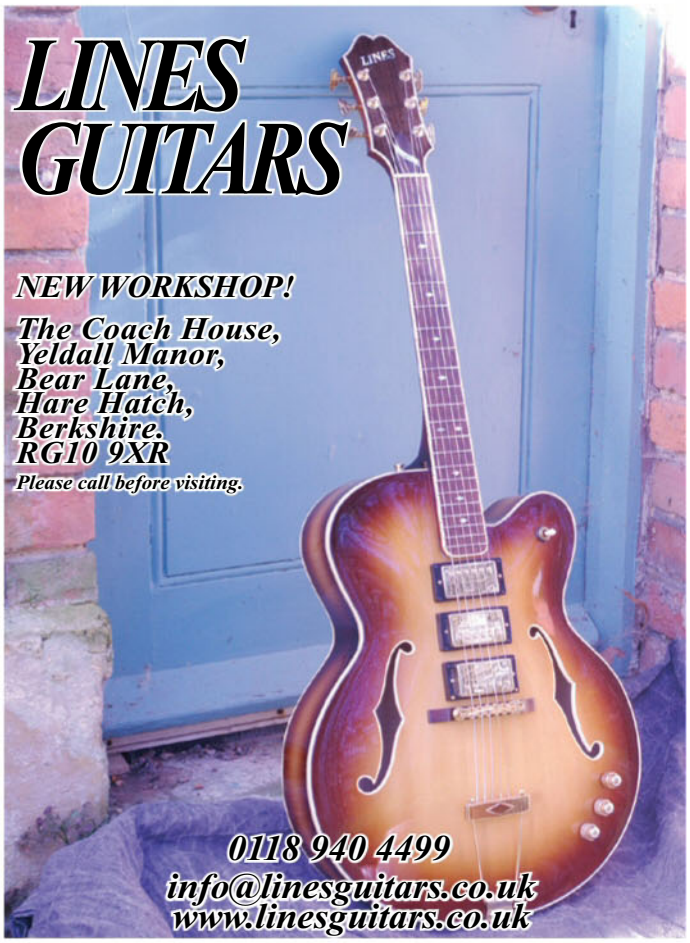

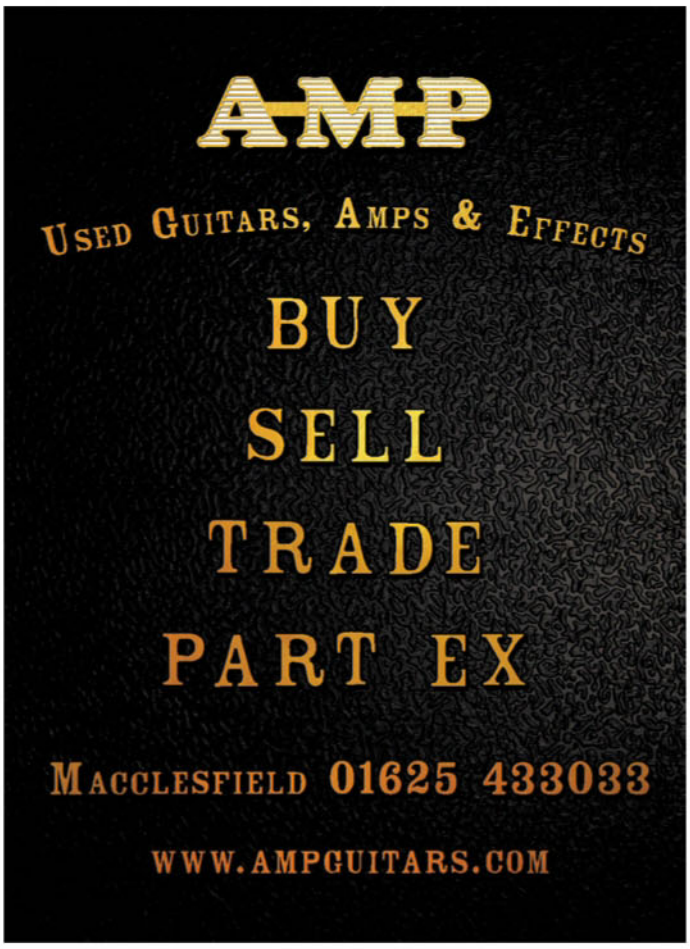

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Fender Squier Bass VI, sunburst, perfect condition, gig bag, £220 ono. Also, Shure SM58, old but good, £30. Tel: 07748 459986 after 7pm, Croydon area

Fender FM212R amp, as new, £130. Peavey Predator Strat, £120. Ibanez Roadstar with two DiMarzios plus one Ibanez single-coil, £185. DiMarzio Cruiser pickup, £50. DiMarzio humbucker pickup, £30. Tel: 07830 444829, Liverpool.

Music Man Sterling Sub Halen model, maple neck, blue, £200. Tel: 01492 512954, North Wales.

Ashdown Sub Octave Plus bass pedal, £40. Casio DG10 digital guitar, £100. Peavey Session bass amp, 200W, 4 ohms, USA, £100. Tel: 07710 147205, Beds

Epiphone Emperor Swingster archtop guitar wine red, licensed B30 Bigsby, Swingbucker pickups, great for rockabilly/jazz/rock, hard case. Tel: 07966 217971, Durham

Fender American Standard Stratocaster in mint condition, deep red colour, rosewood fingerboard. Fender hardcase. £625. Tel: Mike 01273 588685/07771 753386, Peacehaven, East Sussex

Pickups: Set of 3 1988 US Standard Strat (Squier upgrade?!) £60; DiMarzio HS3 Strat bridge £40; David White Old Glories Tele neck, £40. All as new. Tel: Brian 07904 184047

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Epiphone Dove Pro electro-acoustic, violinburst, Fishman pickup, Epiphone hardcase, immaculate condition £270 ono; Aria Pro, '70s LP, red with stripped top, £160. Tel: Kev 01536 203200, Corby

Gibson Les Paul Traditional 2009, honeyburst, Classic 57 pickups and all standard, quite light for a Trad model at 8lbs 11ozs, Gibson case and candy all intact, excellent condition throughout, £1150. Tel Mick: 01671 820954

Gibson ES-335 Dot Plain Top cherry red 2012 model with hardcase COA, £1800 ovno. Tel: Adam 07872 318288, Feltham, Middlesex

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Digitech RP-6 or RP-7. Must be good condition and price, may collect. Tel: 07923 801153

Mesa/Boogie Express 5:25, good condition, pref London area. Tel: Mick 020 8530 1208

Music Man Silhouette 1990, 1991 or 1992. Must be vgc, three single coils, hardtail with MM case, cash waiting. Tel: Richard 02392 348487, Portsmouth

Epiphone Firebird VII, Vibrola gold cover, good price paid. Tel: Chris 07841 160921

Award-Session Stockton amp wanted. Tel: 07887 972019, Lanarkshire

Squier Super-Sonic Japan, late '90s, blue sparkle preferred. Call Ron 01384 873390, Stourbridge

Gibson Les Paul R9 Plaintop 1997-2003 Historic Custom Shop, original to 'player', fair price paid. Tel: 07814 797163 or email glen1149@hotmail.com, Devon

Fender soft-V neck wanted for Baja Tele, vgc or as new. Tel: 01429 296413, Teesside

Kay K592 Red Devil 1960s, must have Bigsby and white guard, in good to reasonable condition. Tel: Alan 0115 9255566

Tailpiece for Gibson ES-140 3/4 scale with 'ridged' crossbar. Also Gibson pickguard: five-ply (B/W/B/W/B) '50s 'Royalite' type to cut for my ES-5. Tel: Geoff 01162 891919, Leicestershire

Yamaha SG200 wanted, pearl white. Tel/txt: 07710 161598 or Chris-r1968@ hotmail.co.uk

Fender soft-V neck wanted for Baja Tele, vgc or as new. Tel: 01429 296413, Teesside

Vintage Paradise guitar. Txt/call: Andy 07944 651798 or email delavigne@btinternet.com

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Soundtrack of my life

David Tattersall

The Wave Pictures

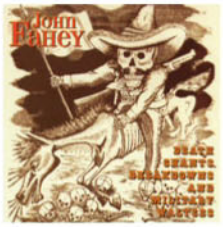
Classic blues, folk, rock and punk are the favourites of the fiercely independent garage rock guitarist

The alternative music orthodoxy routinely disdains overt technical ability, yet David Tattersall – who has even been heralded in some quarters as the best guitarist of his generation – is currently storming those barricades with a blistering, righteous bombast of off-kilter fretboard virtuosity. Tattersall first began playing in local Midlands folk clubs aged just 11 or 12, but turned to rock music on hearing indie darlings such as the Go-Betweens, Jonathan Richman, and Violent Femmes. His band the Wave Pictures have already clocked up 12 albums, but the latest, *Great Big Flamingo Burning Moon*, finds them teaming up with another unconventional guitar hero, garage-punk legend Billy Childish. It's a vital, lo-fi triumph simmering with angular delights crafted upon Childish's collection of oddball vintage gear... and fortified too, perhaps, with a touch of Billy's natural imperious swagger.

John Fahey

DEATH CHANTS, BREAKDOWNS AND MILITARY WALTZES

I was fascinated by Fahey's music as a child and I still am today. His playing is so plain and simple but the music is powerful, dark and mysterious.



You can figure out how to fingerpick a guitar just by listening to him. Lots of guys can play twice as fast, but most of them sound rubbish! What he did knocks me out.

Rory Gallagher

RORY GALLAGHER

When I was about 12 I used to watch a video of Rory on *The Old Grey Whistle Test*. I must have watched it 100 times! I learned so much from it,

and I loved that he didn't use effects. Everything he played was very emotional, and his music was very alive. To this day, his recordings still sound fresh and spontaneous.

Robert Johnson

THE COMPLETE RECORDINGS

Robert Johnson knew how to set a mood and tell a story. His syncopation, dexterity and his inventiveness blow me away. He's spooky! He

sounds like a ghost. I remember listening to this and being able to see his guitar in my mind's eye. It was as powerful to me as if there really had been a ghost in the room.

Bo Diddley

HIS GREATEST SIDES: VOLUME ONE

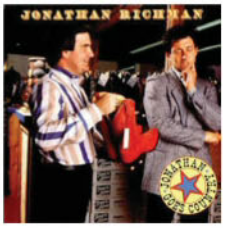
This is the first vinyl record I ever bought with my own money. The first track (which is called *Bo Diddley* – he famously liked to sing about himself)

sounded like molten lava pouring out of the speakers. This thing is hot! I loved the jungle drums, his guitar sound and his voice. I loved everything about it and I still do.

Jonathan Richman

JONATHAN GOES COUNTRY

The first song I ever heard by Jonathan Richman was *Corner Store*, from this album. It has this great Nashville Tele picking, and his voice just drew me



in. It hit me like a wave that a song could really be about anything. It made me excited about writing songs and playing in a rock'n'roll band. It saved me from the folk clubs!

The Go-Betweens

SEND ME A LULLABY

One minute I was playing John Fahey tunes in folk clubs, and the next I was playing *Touch Me I'm Sick* by Mudhoney in pubs. It was loud and bad, like

most teenage bands. This record gave me a songwriting model that I could learn from. The only thing missing was Rory Gallagher-style leads, so I try to put that into our music.

Herman Dune

THEY GO TO THE WOODS

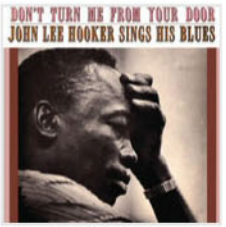
They came to play at Leicester Arts Centre around the time they made this dark little masterpiece. They were very original. They had two Silvertone

guitars and a drummer, and took it in turns to sing the most honest and natural songs I had ever heard. They played their guitars beautifully, too. A band that changed my life.

John Lee Hooker

DON'T TURN ME FROM YOUR DOOR

John Lee Hooker goes deeper than anyone. He has a narrow range technically, but he's capable of capturing a deeper range of emotions than



anybody. You're hearing an elemental talent. The thing that Hendrix and Dylan had a bit of... John Lee Hooker is made up of that thing, and nothing else. Pure charisma.

WILD BILLY CHILDISH & HIS FAMOUS HEADCOATS

I AM THE OBJECT OF YOUR DESIRE

My best mate bought this for me when we were teenagers. It sounded like Bo Diddley to me. He

does the bragging bluesman bit so well. He really joins the dots from blues to punk. When he's rocking he's just as convincing to my ears as Muddy Waters or Link Wray.

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